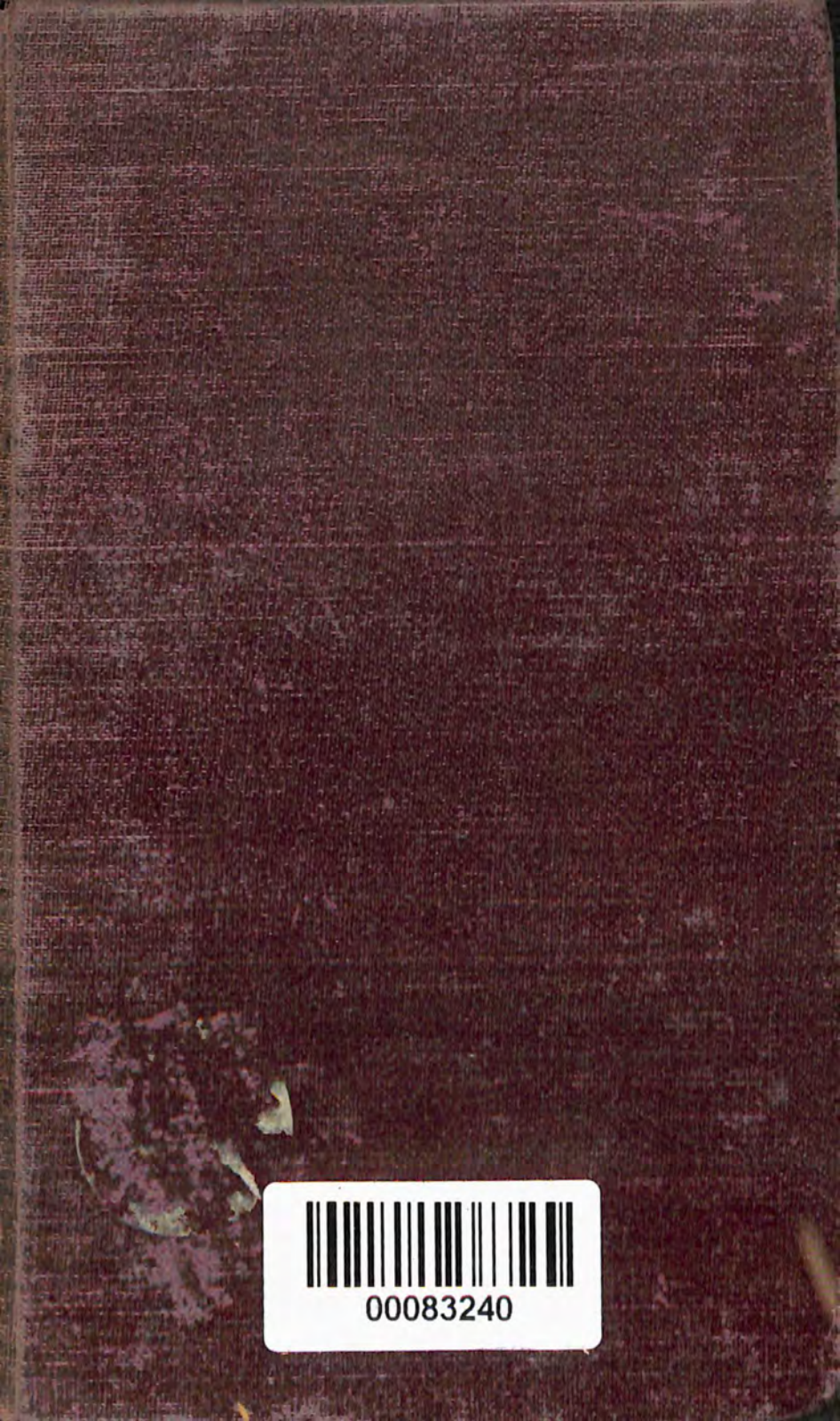
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CLEGG HALL, NEAR ROCHDALE.

TRADITIONS

OF

LANCASHIRE.

83240 ae. Second Series. B931

BY J. ROBY, M.R.S.L.

"Time has spared the epitaph on Adrian's horse,—confounded that of himself." SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

LONGMAN, REES, ORME, BROWN, AND GREEN

PATERNOSTER-ROW.

MDCCCXXXI.

00083240

LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

CONTENTS

OF

THE SECOND VOLUME.

	Page
Clegg Hall	1
The Mermaid of Martin Meer	55
George Fox	83
The Demon of the Well	111
The Sands	141
The Ring and the Cliff	163
The Dead Man's Hand	183
The Lost Farm	209
The Maid's Stratagem	257
The Skull-House	285
Rivington Pike	305

CLEGG HALL.

CLEGG HALL.

CLEGG HALL, about two miles N. E. from Rochdale, is still celebrated for the freaks and visitations of a supernatural guest, called "Clegg-Hall Boggart."

So desultory and various are the accounts we have heard, and many of them so vague and unintelligible, that it has been a work of much difficulty to weave them into one continuous narrative, and to shape them into a plot sufficiently interesting for our purpose. The name and character of "Noman" are still the subject of many an absurd and marvellous story among the country chroniclers in that region.

Dr. Whitaker says, it is "the only estate within the parish which still continues in the local family name." On this site was the old house built by Bernulf de Clegg and Quenilda his wife, as early as the reign of Stephen. Not a vestige of it remains. The present comparatively modern erection was built by Theophilus Ashton, of Rochdale, a lawyer, and one of the Ashtons of Little Clegg, about the year 1620.

Stubley Hall, mentioned in our tale, was built by Robert Holt, in the reign of Henry VIII. The decay of our native

woods had then occasioned a pretty general disuse of timber for the frame-work of dwelling-houses belonging to this class of our domestic architecture. Dr. Whitaker says, " It is the first specimen in the parish of a stone or brick hall-house of the second order; that is, with a centre and two wings only. Long before the Holts, appear at this place a Nicholas and a John de Stubley, in the years 1322 and 1332; then follow in succession John, Geoffrey, Robert, and Christopher Holt; from whom descended, though not in a direct line, Robert Holt of Castleton and Stubley; whose daughter, Dorothy, married, in the year 1649, John Entwisle of Foxholes. Robert, who built Stubley, and who was grandson of Christopher Holt before mentioned, was a justice of the peace in the year 1528. In an old visitation of Lancashire by Thomas Tong, Norroy, 30 Hen. VIII., is this singular entry: — " Robarde Holte of Stubley, hase mar. an ould woman, by whom he hase none issewe, and therefore he wolde not have her name entryed." Yet it appears he had a daughter, Mary, who married Charles Holt, her cousin, descended from the first Robert. Her grandson was the Robert Holt, father to Dorothy Entwisle before named, at whose marriage the events took place which, if the following tradition is to be credited, were the forerunners of a more strange and unexpected developement.

In the year 1640, nine years before the date of our story, Robert Holt abandoned Stubley for the warmer and more fertile situation of Castleton, about a mile south from Rochdale. It was so named from the *castellum de Recedham*, wherein dwelt Gamel, the Saxon Thane; which place and personage are described in our first series of Traditions. Castleton was principally abbey-land belong-

ing to the house of Stanlaw. Part of this township, the hamlet of Marland or Mereland, was, at the dissolution of monasteries, granted to the Radcliffs of Langley, and sold by Henry Radcliff to Charles Holt, who married his cousin, Mary Holt of Stubley, and was grandfather to Robert, who left Stubley for this place, which we have noticed above.

Stubley, with its neighbourhood, was always noted for good ale. From its situation, exposed to all the rigours of that hilly region, the climate was reckoned so cold as to require that their daily beverage should be of sufficient strength to counteract its effects. That habits of intemperance would be contracted from the constant use of such stimuli, may easily be inferred. The following letter from Nicholas Stratford, Bishop of Chester, to James Holt of Castleton, son of Robert Holt before named, is but too melancholy a confirmation of this inference.

The original is in the possession of the Rev. J. Clowes, of Broughton Hall.

" Sir,

" Your request in behalf of Mr. Halliwell was easily granted; for I am myself inclined to give the best encouragement I can to the poor curates, as long as they continue diligent in the discharge of their duty. But I have now, Sir, a request to make to you, which I heartily pray you may as readily grant me; and that is, that you will for the future abandon and abhor the sottish vice of drunkenness, which (if common fame be not a great liar) you are much addicted to. I beseech you, Sir, frequently and seriously to consider the many dismal fruits and consequences of this sin, even in this world;—how destructive

it is to all your most valuable concerns and interests; how it blasts your reputation, destroys your health, and will (if continued) bring you to a speedy and untimely death; and, which is infinitely more dreadful, will exclude you from the kingdom of heaven, and expose you to that everlasting fire, where you will not be able to obtain so much as one drop of water to cool your tongue. I have not leisure to proceed in this argum^{t}, nor is it needful that I should, because you yourself can enlarge upon it without my.... I assure you, S^{r}, this advice now given you proceeds from sincere love, and my earnest desire to promote your happiness both in this world and the next; and I hope you will be pleased so to accept from,

" S^{r},

" Your affectionate Friend,

" and humble Servant,

" N. CESTRIENS.

" Chester, Nov. 1699."

Clegg Hall, after many changes of occupants, is now in part used as a country alehouse; other portions are inhabited by the labouring classes who find employment in that populous and manufacturing district. It is the property of Joseph Fenton, Esq. of Bamford Hall, by purchase from John Entwisle, Esq., the present possessor of Foxholes in that neighbourhood.

CLEGG HALL.

——" Is there no exorcist
Beguiles the truer office of mine eyes?
Is 't real that I see?"

SHAKSPEARE.

To Clegg Hall, or rather what was once the site of that ancient house, tradition points through the dim vista of past ages, as the scene of an unnatural and cruel tragedy. Not that this picturesque and stately pile, with its gable and zigzag terminations, the subject of our present engraving, was the very place where the murder was perpetrated; but a low, dark, and wooden-walled tenement, such as our forefathers were wont to construct in times anterior to the Tudor ages. The present building, with its little porch, quaint and grotesque, its balustrade and balcony above, and the points and pediments on the four sides, are evidently the coinage of some more modern brain,—peradventure in King James's days. Not unlike the character of that learned monarch and of his times, half classical, half barbarous, it combines the puerilities of each, without the power and grandeur of the one, or the rich and chivalric

magnificence of the other; and might remind the beholder of some gaunt warrior of the middle ages, with lance, and armour, and "ladye-love," stalking forth, clad in the Roman toga, or the stately garb of the senator. The building, the subject of our tale, has neither the gorgeous extravagance of the Gothic, nor the severe and stern utility of the Roman architecture. Little bits of columns, dwarf-like, and frittered down into mere extremities, give the porch very much the appearance of a child's plaything, or a Dutch toy stuck to its side.

It has the very air and attitude, — the pedantic formalities of the time when it was built. Not so the house on whose ruins it was erected; the square, low, dark mansion, constructed of wood, heavy and gigantic, shaped like the hull of some great ship, the ribs and timbers being first fixed, and the interstices afterwards filled with a compost of clay and chopped straw, to keep out the weather. Of such rude and primitive architecture were the dwellings of the English gentry in former ages: such was the house built by Bernulf and Quenilda Clégg, in the reign of Stephen, the supposed scene of that horrible deed which gave rise to the stories yet extant relating to "Clegg-Hall Boggart." Popular story is not precise, generally, as to facts and dates. The exact time when this occurrence took place we know not; but it is more than probable that some dark transaction of this nature was here perpetrated. The prevailing tradition warrants our belief. However fanciful and extravagant the filling up of the picture, common rumour still preserves, untouched, the general outline. It is said that, some time about the thirteenth or fourteenth century, a wicked uncle destroyed the lawful heirs of this goodly possession,

— two orphan children that were left to his care, — by throwing them over a balcony into the moat, that he might seize on the inheritance. Such is the story which, to this day, retains its hold on the popular mind; and ever after, it is said, the house was the reputed haunt of a troubled and angry spirit, until means were taken for its removal, or rather its expulsion. But upon the inhuman deed itself we shall not dilate, inasmuch as the period is too remote, and the events are too vague, for our purpose.

The house built by Bernulf Clegg had passed, with many alterations and renewals, into the possession of the Ashtons of Little Clegg. About the year 1620 the present edifice was built, by Theophilus Ashton; and thirty years had scarcely elapsed from its erection to the date of our story. Though the original dwelling had, with one or two exceptions, been pulled down, yet symptoms of "the boggart" were still manifest in the occasional visitations and annoyances to which the inmates were subject.

The hues of evening were spread out, like a rich tapestry, above and behind the long unpicturesque line of hills, the lower acclivities of Blackstonedge, opposite to the stately mansion of Clegg Hall. The square squat tower of Rochdale Church peered out from the dark trees, high on its dim eyrie, in the distance, towards the south-west, below which a wan hazy smoke indicated the site of that thriving and populous town. To the right, the heavy blue ridge of mountains, bearing the appropriate name of Blackstonedge, had not yet put on its cold, grey, neutral tint; but the mass appeared to rise abruptly from the green enclosures stretching to its base, in strong and beautiful contrast of colour, such as painters love to express on

the mimic canvass. It was a lovely evening in October; one of Nature's parting smiles, ere she envelops herself in the horrors and the gloom of winter. So soft and balmy was the season, that the wild flowers lingered longer than usual in the woods and copses where they dwelt. In the gardens, some of the spring blossoms had already unfolded. The wallflowers and polyanthuses had looked out again, unhesitatingly, on the genial sky — deprived, by sophistication and culture, of the instincts necessary to their preservation: — the wild untutored denizens of the field and the quiet woods rarely betray such lack of presentiment. But such are, every where, the results of civilisation; which, however beneficial to society in the aggregate, gives its objects altogether an artificial character, and, by depriving them of their natural and proper instincts, renders them helpless when single and unaided; while it makes them more dependent upon each other, and on the factitious wants, the offspring of those very habits and conditions into which they are thrown.

On the hollow trunk of a decrepit ash the ivy was blossoming profusely; gathering its support from the frail prop which it was fated to destroy. The insects were humming and frolicking about on their tiny wings, taking their last enjoyment of their little day, ere they gave place to the ephemera of the next.

"How merry and jocund every life-gifted thing looks forth on this our festival. It might be Nature holding high jubilee in honour of Holt's daughter on her wedding night!"

Thus spake Nicholas Haworth to his sister Alice, as they stepped forth from the hall porch, and stayed for a

moment by this aged trunk, to admire the scene that was fast losing its glory and its brightness. They were bidden to the marriage supper at Stubley, where a masqued ball was to be given after the nuptials of Dorothy Holt, the daughter of its possessor, with Enwisle, the heir of Foxholes.*

"It may be holiday and gladness too; but I feel it not," said Alice pensively, as she leaned on her brother's arm, while they turned into a narrow lane overarched by irregular groups of beech and sycamore trees.

"Heed not such idle fancies," said her brother. "And so because, forsooth, an impudent beggar-man predicts some strange event that must shortly befall thee, the apprehension doth cast its shadow ere it come, and thou art ready to conjure up some grim spectre in the gloom it hath created. But, in good sooth, here comes the wizard himself who hath raised these melancholic and evil humours."

"I never pass him without a shudder," said she, at the same time cringing closely to her protector.

This awful personage was one of an ancient class, now probably extinct; a sort of privileged order, supplying, or rather usurping, the place of the mendicant friars of former days. Their vocation was not of an unprofitable kind, inasmuch as alms were commonly rendered, though more from fear than favour. Woe betide the unlucky housewife who withheld her dole, her modicum of meal or money, to these sturdy applicants! Mischief from some invisible hand was sure to follow, and the cause was laid to her lack of charity.

* Her marriage gift was £500, nineteen cows, and a bull, — a magnificent portion in those days.

The being, the subject of these remarks, had been for many months a periodical visiter at the Hall, where he went by the name of "Noman." It is not a little remarkable, that tradition should here point out an adventure something analogous to that of Ulysses with the Cyclop as once happening to this obscure individual, and that his escape was owing to the same absurd equivoque by which the Grecian chief escaped from his tormentor. Our tale, however, hath reference to weightier matters, and the brief space we possess permits no farther digression. This aged, but hale and sturdy beggar wore a grey frieze coat or cloak loosely about his person. Long blue stocking gaiters, well patched and darned, came over his knee; while his doublet and hosen, or body-gear, were fastened together by the primitive attachment of wooden skewers, — a contrivance now obsolete, being superseded by others more elegant and seemly. A woollen cap or bonnet, of unparalleled form and dimensions, was disposed upon his head, hiding the upper part of his face, and almost covering a pair of bushy grey eye-brows, that, in their turn, crouched over a quick and vagrant eye, little the worse for the wear of, probably, some sixty years. A grizzled reddish beard hung upon his breast; and his aspect altogether was forbidding, — almost ferocious. A well-plenished satchel was on his shoulder; and he walked slowly and erect, as though little disposed to make way for his betters in the narrow path, where they must inevitably meet. When they came nearer, he stood still, in the middle of the road, as though inclined to dispute their passage. His tall and well-proportioned figure, apparent even beneath these grotesque habiliments, stood out before them in bold relief against the

red and burning sky, where an opening in the lane admitted all the glow and fervour of the western sunset. His strange, wayward, and even mysterious character was no bar to his admittance into the mansions of the gentry, through a wide circuit of country; where his familiarities were tolerated, or perhaps connived at, even by many whose gifts he received more as a right than as an obligation.

He looked steadfastly on them as they approached, but without the slightest show either of respect or good will.

"Prithee, stand a little on one side, that we may pass by without fear of offence," said Nicholas Haworth, good-humouredly.

"And whither away, young master and my dainty miss?" was the reply, in his usual easy and familiar address, such as might have suited one of rank and condition.

Haworth, little disturbed thereat, said with a careless smile,—"Troth, thou hast not been so long away but thou mightest have heard of the wedding feast to-night, and, peradventure, been foremost for the crumbs of the banquet."

"I know well there's mumming and foolery a-going on yonder; and I suppose ye join the merry-making, as they call it?"

"Ay, that do we; and so prithee begone."

"And your masks will ne'er be the wiser for 't, I trow," said the beggar, looking curiously upon them from beneath his penthouse lids.

"But that I could laugh at his impertinence, Alice, I would even now chide him soundly, and send his pitiful carcass to the stocks for this presumption. Hark thee, I do offer good counsel when I warn thee to shift thyself,

and that speedily, ere I use the readiest means for thy removal."

"Gramercy, brave ruffler; but I must e'en gi'e ye the path; an' so pass on to the masking, my Lord Essex and his maiden Queen."

He said this with a cunning look, and a chuckle of self-gratulation at the knowledge he had some how or other acquired of the parts they were intending to enact.

"Foul fa' thy busy tongue, where foundest thou this news? I've a month's mind to change my part, Alice, but that there's neither leisure nor opportunity, and they lack our presence at the nuptials."

"How came he by this knowledge, and the fashion of our masks?" enquired Alice from her brother. "Truly, I could join belief with those who say that he obtained it not through the ordinary channels open to our frail and fallible intellects."

Mistress Alice, "the gentle Alice," was reckoned fair and well-favoured. Strongly tinctured with romance, her superstition was continually fed by the stories then current in relation to her own dwelling, and by the generally received opinions about witches and other sùpernatural things, which yet lingered, loth to depart from these remote limits of civilisation.

"Clegg-Hall Boggart" was the type of a notion too general to be disbelieved; yet were the inmates, in all probability, less intimately acquainted with the freaks and disturbances attendant thereon than every gossip in the neighbourhood; for, as it frequently happens, tales and marvels, for the most part originating through roguery, and the pranks of servants and retainers, were less likely to come to the ears of the master and his family than

those of persons less interested, but more likely to assist in their propagation. The vagrant and erratic movements of "Noman" were, somehow or another, connected with the marvellous adventures and appearances in the "boggart chamber." At the Hall, this discarded room, being part of the old house yet remaining, was the one which he was permitted to occupy during his stay; and his appearance was generally the signal of a visit from their supernatural guest. To be sure, the strange sights he beheld rested on his testimony alone; but his word was never questioned, and his coming was of equal potency with the magician's wand in raising the ghost.

"We shall have some news from our troublesome guest, I suppose, in the morning," said Alice to her brother, as they went slowly on: "I know not the cause; but yonder vagrant seems to waken our ancient companion from his slumbers, either by sympathy or antipathy, I trow."

"For the most part they be idle tales," said he; "though I doubt not, in former days, the place was infested by some unquiet spirit. But this good house of ours hath modern stuff too strong upon it. The smell of antiquity alone hath a savour delicate enough for your musty ghost."

Alice pressed his arm slightly as an admonition, at the same time gently chiding his unbelief. Thus beguiling the way with pleasant discourse, they drew nigh to the old house at Stubley, little more than a mile distant from their own dwelling.

Though now resident in his more modern, sheltered, and convenient mansion of Castleton, Holt determined that his daughter's wedding should be solemnised in the ancient halls, where Robert Bath, vicar of Rochdale, who

was presented to the living on his marriage with a niece of Archbishop Laud, was invited to perform the ceremony; — "A man," says Dr. Whitaker, "of very different principles from his patron; for he complied with all changes but the last, and retained his benefice till August 24. 1662, when he went out on the Bartholomew Act, and retired to a small house at Deepleach Hill, near Rochdale, where he frequently preached to a crowded auditory." *

* We are sorry that this remark should come from the historian of Whalley; but our respect for the author even, will not suffer us to let it pass unnoticed. The passage, indeed, refutes itself, and we need refer to none other than the very terms of the accusation. The circumstance of Bath "going out under the Bartholomew Act," that master-movement of spiritual tyranny, issued by an ill-advised and sensual monarch, when two thousand and upwards of conscientious clergymen were driven from their flocks and deprived of their benefices in one day, is a sufficient denial of what the learned Doctor has insinuated, as it respects complying "with all changes" from mere self-interest and worldly lucre. For what could have hindered this conscientious and self-denying minister from conforming to the terms of the act, and securing his goodly benefice thereby, if it were not a zealous and honest regard to the vows he had taken, and the future welfare of his flock; which the very fact of his subsequent preaching to crowded auditories at his own house sufficiently corroborates. We know the persecutions, the malice, and the poverty, which would assail this unlicensed administration of ordinances; and nothing but a reverential awe for the sacred and responsible functions he had undertaken could have stimulated him to "endure the cross and despise the shame," when a very different line of conduct would have left him in the undisturbed possession of both wealth and patronage. But, we are afraid, the unpardonable offence of preaching in the church under the authority and protection of the Commonwealth, and his leaving her pale and preaching to "crowded auditories," when the wicked decree of St. Bartholomew went forth, is ungrateful to the spirit of many, who ought not to stigmatise as sectaries and malignants all who have dared to think for themselves, and at any time to oppose "spiritual

As they came nigh, lights were already glancing between the mullions of the great hall window, then richly ornamented with painted glass. The guests were loitering about the walks and terraces in the little garden plots, which in that bleak and chilly region were scantily furnished. In the hall, fitted up with flowers and green holly wreaths for the occasion, the father of the bride and his intended son-in-law were pacing to and fro in loving discourse; the latter pranked out in a costly pair of "petticoat breeches," pink and white, of the newest fashion, reaching only to the knee. These were ornamented with ribands and laces at the two extremities, below which silk stockings, glistering like silver, and immense pink shoe-roses, completed his nether costume. A silken doublet and waistcoat of rich embroidery, over which was a turned-down shirt-collar of point lace, surmounted the whole.

His friends and officials were busily employed in arranging matters for the occasion, distributing the wedding favours, and preparing for the entertainments and festivities that were to follow.

Holt and his son-in-law were exempt from duty, save that of welcoming those that were bidden, upon their arrival.

Before an oaken screen, beautifully carved with arabesque

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wickedness" in "high places." The very principles which made Bath an outcast for conscience sake, are those which originated and led on the work of our Protestant Reformation, and placed the historian of Whalley where his sacred functions should have led him to respect the rights and consciences even of those from whom he might differ, and not hold them up to unmerited obloquy and reprehension.

ornaments and armorial bearings*, there was a narrow table, covered with a white cloth, and on it the prayer-book, open at the marriage formulary. Four stools were placed for those more immediately interested in the ceremony. Rosemary and bay leaves, gilt and dipped in scented water, were scattered about the marriage altar in love-knots and many fanciful and ingenious devices. A bride-cup rested upon it, in which lay a sprig of gilded rosemary, — a relic or semblance of the ancient hymeneal torch. Huge tables, groaning with garniture for the approaching feast, were laid round the apartment, — room being left in the central floor for all who chose to mingle in the games and dances that were expected after supper.

The company were now assembled, and the ceremony about to commence. The bride, clothed in white, with a veil of costly workmanship thrown over her, was led in by her maidens and a train of friends. The bridegroom taking her hand, they stood before the altar, and the brief, but indissoluble knot was tied. The kiss being given, the happy husband led away his partner into the parlour or guest-chamber, followed by many of those who had witnessed the ceremony. Alice and her brother

* This interesting and curious relic is now in the possession of the Rev. J. Clowes, of Broughton, whose ancestor, Samuel Clowes, Esq., about the year 1690, married Mary Cheetham, a descendant of Humphrey Cheetham, founder of the Manchester Blue Coat School. In 1713, after the death of James Holt, whose faithful rebuke from the Bishop of Chester we have noticed in the introduction, Castleton came into possession of the Cheethams until the death of Edward Cheetham, in 1769.

The screen is now made into a side-board, and is most fancifully and beautifully wrought with crests, ciphers, and cognizances belonging to the Holts, and many of the neighbouring families.

were amongst them; and the bride, perceiving their entrance, drew the hand of the maiden within hers, and retained her, for a short season, by her side.

The feast was begun; those who were for the mask took but a hasty refreshment, being anxious to proceed into the 'tiring rooms, there to array for the more interesting part of the night's revel. In due time issued forth from their crowded bowers, lords and ladies gay, buffoons, morris-dancers, and the like; gypsies, fortune-tellers, and a medley of giddy mummers, into the hall, where the more sedate or more sensual were still carousing after the feast.

"Room for the masks!" was the general cry; and the musicians, each after his kind, did pierce and vex the air with such a medley of disquieting sounds, that the talkers were fain to cease, and the dancers to fall to, in good earnest. Alice and her brother were disguised as the cunning beggar had predicted, to wit, as the virgin queen and her unfortunate lover. Masks were often dropping in, so that the hall and adjoining chambers were fully occupied, resounding, in wild echoes, with noise and revelry.

Loud and long was the merriment, increasing even until the roofs rung with the din, and the revellers themselves grew weary of the tumult.

Alice was standing by the oaken screen, during a temporary cessation on her part from the labours incident to royalty, when there came from behind it a tawny Moor, wearing a rich shawl turban, with a beard of comely aspect. His arms were bare and hung with massive bracelets, and he wore a tight jacket of crimson and gold. His figure was tall and commanding; but his face was

concealed by a visor of black crape, which hindered not his speech from being clearly apprehended, though the sound came forth in a muffled tone, as if feigned for the occasion. Immediately there followed an Arabic or Turkish doctor, clad in a long dark robe, and his head surmounted by a four-cornered fur cap. In one hand he held a glass phial, and a box under his left arm. Of an erect and majestic stature, he stood for a moment apparently surveying the scene ere he mingled in the busy crowd. His face also was covered with black crape, and through the "eyelet holes" a bright and burning glance shot forth, hardly repressed by the shadow from his disguise. Alice, being unattended, shunned these unknown intruders, and mingled again with a merry group, who were pelting one another with comfits and candied almonds. The stately Elizabeth beckoned to her maidens; but they merely curtsied to their royal mistress, without discontinuing their boisterous hilarity. Indeed, the mumming hitherto had been more in dress than manners, so little restraint had their outward disguise occasioned, or their behaviour been altered thereby. The two late comers, however, produced a change. It appeared that their business was to enact a play or cunning device, for the amusement of the company, who, regarding them with a curious eye, one by one left off their several sports to gaze upon the strangers.

The rest were generally known to each other; but whispers and enquiries now went round, from which it appeared that the new visitants were strictly concealed, and their presence unexpected.

"Now o' my faith," said Harry Cheetham, whose skill in dancing and drollery had been conspicuous throughout

the evening, " yon barbarians be come from the Grand Turk, with his kerchief, recruiting for the seraglio."

" Out upon thee!" said a jingling Morisco, enacted by young Hellawell of Pike House, " the Grand Signior loveth not maidens such as ours for his pavilion. They be too frosty to melt, even in Afric's sunny clime." This was said with a malicious glance at Alice, whose queen-like dignity and haughty bearing had kept many an ardent admirer at bay through the evening.

" Sure the master of the feast hath withheld this precious delectation until now," said Essex; " for they, doubtless, be of his providing."

" And give promise of more novel but less savoury entertainment," said Hamer of Hamer. But Holt either knew them not, or his look of surprise, not unmixed with curiosity and expectation, shewed that he was playing the masker too, without other disguise than his own proper features, — the kind, hospitable face of an honest north country squire, ruddy with health and conviviality.

At the farther end of the hall, the bride and her bride-maidens were standing, with the bridegroom at her side, whispering soft gallantries in her ear. The strangers, on their entrance, rendered neither token nor obeisance, as courtesy required, to the bride and her train, but followed Alice, who had joined her brother in the merry crowd, now watching the motions of these unexpected visitants. They approached with stately and solemn steps; and, without once deigning to notice the rest of the company, the gaudy Moor bowed himself in a most dignified *salaam* before the queen. Alice, apparently with some trepidation at being thus singled out from the rest, clung to her brother, she hardly knew why.

"My sublime master, Emperor of the world, lord of the sun, and ruler of the seven celestial configurations, sendeth his slave unto the most high and mighty Queen, — whose beauty, as a girdle, doth encompass the whole earth, — with greeting."

"And who is he?" said Alice, timidly enough.

"The Sultan Ibrahim, lord of the seven golden towers, the emerald islands, and ruler over an hundred nations. He bade his slave kiss the hem of his mistress's garment, and beseech her to put her foot on the neck of his bondman, her slave's slave, and accept his gift."

"And who is this thy companion?" said Alice, growing bolder, while the company were gradually gathering round them.

"This, whom your unworthy slave hath brought, most gracious Queen, is the renowned Doctor Aboulfahrez, high conjuror to the Khan of Tartary, and physician to the Great Mogul. He doth drive hence all pains and diseases whatsoever, and will cure your great majesty of any disorder of the spirit, by reason of charms or love-philtres heretofore administered."

With a slight bend of his illustrious person, as though the high conjuror to the Khan of Tartary, and physician to the Great Mogul, thought himself too nearly on an equality with her "high mightinesse" the Queen, the learned doctor for the first time broke silence —

"Will it please the Queen's grace to command an ensample of mine art?"

"We must first be assured unto what purpose. Hast thou not heard," said Alice, with increasing confidence, "that it is treason to put forth strange or unlawful devices before the Queen?"

The stranger bowed. "But your grace hath traitors in those fair eyes, which do prompt treason if they practise none."

This gallant speech was much applauded by the company, and relieved Alice from the necessity of a speedy and suitable answer; for she began to be somewhat perplexed by the address of these bold admirers.

"Look at this precious phial, the incomparable elixir, the pabulum of life, the grand arcanum, the supernaculum, the mother and regenerator of nature, the source and the womb of all existence, past, present, and to come!" The learned doctor paused, more from want of breath, than from a scarcity of epithets wherewith to blazon forth the great virtues of his discovery. Soon, however, he breathed again through the mouth-slit in his mask, and blew on the phial, when, lo! a vapour issued from within, curling in long-drawn wreathes down the side, in a manner most wonderful to behold.

This trick roused the admiration of his audience, but he made a sign that they should be still, as their breath and acclamations might disturb the process. He now thrust one finger into the vapour, when it appeared to wind round his hand; then, letting the bottle drop, it fell, suspended from the finger by this novel and extraordinary chain; the vapour seeming to be the link by which it hung. This unexpected feat repressed the noisy burst of applause, which might have been the result of a less wonderful device. Every one looked anxiously and uneasily at his neighbour, and at the renowned Doctor Aboulfahrez, not feeling comfortable, perhaps, or even safe, in the presence of so exalted a personage. But new wonders were at hand. The mysterious visiter uttered

some cabalistic words, and lo! flames burst forth from the magic phial, to the additional wonder and dismay of the beholders.

"When the Queen's grace doth will it, this box shall be opened; but it will behove her to be discreet in what may follow, lest the charm be evaded."

The Moorish slave was silent during this procedure, standing with arms folded, as though he had been one of the mutes of his master's harem, rather than embassador to his "ladye love." With the assent of Alice, the Doctor took in one hand the casket, which he cautiously unlocked. The lid flew open by a secret spring, and a peacock of surprising beauty and glittering plumage rose out of the box, imitating the motions of the real bird to admiration. The mimic thing, being placed on the floor, flapped its wings, and unfolded its tail with all the pride and precision of the original.

"Beshrew me," said Holt, approaching nearer to the performer, "but thou hast been bred to the black art, I think. Some o' ye have catered excellently for our pastime." But who it was, none could ascertain, each giving his neighbour credit secretly for the construction of these dainty devices. Yet new wonders were about to follow, when the bride and bridegroom, though wedded to each other's company, came forward to see the spectacle. Not a guest was missing. Even those, most pleasantly occupied at the tables, left their sack and canary, their spices and confections. The musicians, too, and the menials, seemed to have forgotten their several duties, and stood gaping and marvelling at the show. Suddenly there flew open a little door in the breast of the automaton bird, and out jumped a fair white

pigeon, which, after having performed many surprising feats, in its turn became the parent of another progeny, to wit, a beautiful singing bird, or nightingale, which warbled so sweetly, fluttering its wings with all the ecstasy of that divine creature, that the listeners were nearly beside themselves with ravishment and admiration. The nightingale now opened, and a little humming bird, of most surprising brilliancy, hopped forth, and, jumping up to the Queen, held out its beak, having a label therein, apparently beseeching her to accept the offering. She stooped down to receive the billet, which she hastily unfolded. What effect was visible on her countenance we cannot pretend to say, inasmuch as the mask precluded observation; but there was an evident tremour in her frame. She seemed to be overpowered with surprise, and held out the note as though, for the moment, incapable of deciding whether to accept it or no. Then with a sudden effort she crumpled it together, and thrust it behind her stomacher. Wonder sat silent and watchful on the face of every beholder. The actors in this strange drama had replaced the automata in the box again, closing its lid. The Moor had made his *salaam*, the Doctor his obeisance, disappearing behind the screen, from which they had so mysteriously come forth. But, at their departure, a train of fire followed upon their track, and a lambent flame played curiously upon the wooden crockets for a few seconds, and then disappeared.

Now was there a Babel of tongues unloosed, at first by sudden impulses and whispers, then breaking forth by degrees into a loud and continuous din of voices, all at once seeking to satisfy their enquiries touching this strange and unexpected visit. Their host was mightily

pestered and besieged with questions and congratulations on the subject, which he as promptly and peremptorily disclaimed, attempting to fix the hatching of the plot upon the astonished bridegroom. But even he would not father the conceit; and, in the end, it began to be surmised that these were indeed what their appearance betokened, or something worse, which cast a sudden gloom on the whole assembly. Some sallied out of the door to watch, and others blamed the master for not seizing and detaining these emissaries of Satan. Alice was closely questioned as to the communication she had received; but she replied, evasively perhaps, that it was only one of the usual stale conceits appropriate to the masque.

Nothing more was heard or seen of them; and it was now high time they should accompany the bridegroom to his own dwelling at Foxholes; a goodly house situate on a pretty knoll near the town of Rochdale, and about two miles distant from Stubley.

Now was there mustering and hurrying to depart. An unwieldy coach was drawn up, into which the bride and her female attendants were forthwith introduced, the bridegroom and his company going on foot. On arriving at Foxholes, the needful ceremonies were performed. Throwing the stocking, a custom then universally practised, was not omitted; which agreeable ceremony was performed as follows: —

The female friends and relations conducted the bride to her chamber, and the men the bridegroom. The latter then took the bride's stockings, and the females those of the bridegroom. Sitting at the bottom of the bed, the stockings were thrown over their heads. When

one of the "hurlers" hit the owner, it was deemed an omen that the party would shortly be married. Meanwhile the posset was got ready, and given to the newly-married couple.*

It was past midnight, yet Alice sat, solitary and watchful, at her little casement. One fair white arm supported her cheek, and she was gazing listlessly on the silver clouds, as they floated in liquid brightness across the full round disk of the moon, then high in the meridian. Her thoughts were not on the scene she beheld. The mellow sound of the waterfalls, the murmur from the river, came on with the breeze, rising and falling like the deep pathos of some wild and mysterious music. Memory, that busy enchanter, was at work; and the scenes she had lately witnessed, so full of disquietude and mystery, mingled with the returning tide of past and almost forgotten emotions. We have said that the prevailing bent or bias of her disposition was that of romance; and this idol of the imagination, this love of strange and enervating excitement, had not been repressed by the occurrences of the last few hours; on the contrary, she felt as though some wondrous event was impending, — some adventure which she alone should achieve, — some power that her own arm should contend with and subdue.

She took the billet from her bosom; the moonlight alone fell upon it; but the words were so indelibly fixed upon her imagination, that she fancied she could trace every word on that mystic tablet.

"To-morrow, at midnight, in the haunted chamber! If thou hast courage, tarry there a while. Its occupant

* Brand's Popular Antiquities, ii. 86—96.

will protect thee." — ['Wherefore am I so bent on this adventure? To visit the beggar in his lair!' thought she; and again she threw her eyes on the billet.] "Peril threatens thine house, which thy coming can alone prevent. Shouldest thou reveal but one word of this warning, thy life, and those dear to thee, will be the forfeit. From thine unknown monitor, THESE."

The guest in the boggart-chamber was Noman, to whom it had been allotted, and though he told of terrible sights, and harrowing disclosures, he seemed to brave them all with unflinching hardihood, and even exulted in their repetition. To remain an hour or two with such a companion, was in itself a sufficiently novel adventure; but that harm could come from such a source, scarcely entered her imagination. A feeling of irrepressible curiosity stimulated her, and prevailed over every other consideration. It was not like spending the time alone; this certainly would have been a formidable condition to have annexed. Besides, would it not be a wicked and a wanton thing to shrink from difficulty or danger, when the welfare and even life of one so dear as her brother, peradventure, depended on her compliance. Another feeling, too, more complicated, and a little more selfish it might be, was the hidden cause to which her inclinations might be traced.

"Mine unknown monitor!" she repeated the words, and a thousand strange and wayward fancies rose to her recollection. Often had she seen, when least expecting it, a stranger, who, in whatsoever place they met, preserved a silence respectful but mysterious. She had seen him in the places of public resort, in the solitary woods, and in

the highways; but his reserve and secrecy were unbroken. When she enquired, not an individual knew him; and though his form and features were indelibly traced on her memory, she could never recall them without an effort, which whether it was attended with more of pain than of pleasure, we will not venture to declare. Once or twice she had fancied, when awaking in the dead stillness of the night, that an invisible something was near, and gazing upon her; but this feeling was soon forgotten, though often revived whenever she was more than usually sensitive or excited. The figure of the Moor was wonderfully similar to the form of the mysterious unknown. But the secret was now, at any rate, to be divulged; and a few hours would put her into possession of the key to unlock this curious cabinet. So thought Alice, and her own secret chambers of imagery were strangely distempered thereby. Was she beloved by one of a higher order of beings, a denizen of the invisible world, who tracked her every footstep, and hovered about her unseen. She had heard that such things were, and that they held intercourse with some favoured mortals, — unlimited duration, and a nature more exalted, subject to no change, being vouchsafed to the chosen ones. The exploits at Stubley seemed to favour this hypothesis, and Alice fell into a delicious reverie, as we have seen, well prepared for the belief and reception of any stray marvels that might fall out by the way.

Looking upon the moat which lay stagnant and unruffled beneath the quiet gaze of the moon, she thought that a living form emerged from the bushes on the opposite bank; — she could not be mistaken, it was her unknown lover. Breathless, she awaited the result; but the shadows again closed around him, and she saw him not

again. Bewildered, agitated, and alarmed, the day was springing faintly in the dim east, when her eyelids lay heavy in the dew of their reposè.

Morning was high, and far risen in the clear blue atmosphere; but its first and balmy freshness was past, when Alice left her chamber. She looked paler and more languid than she was wont, and her brother rallied her playfully on the consequences of last night's dissipation; but her thoughts were otherwise engrossed, and she replied carelessly, and with an air of abstraction, far different from her usual playful and unrestrained spirit. The mind was absorbed, restricted to one sole avenue of thought: all other impressions ceased to communicate their impulse. Her brother departed soon afterwards to his morning avocations; but Alice sat in the porch. She looked out on the hills with a vacant, but not unwistful eye. Their slopes were dotted with many a fair white dwelling, but the rigour of cultivation had not extended so far up their barren heathery sides as now; yet many a bright paddock, green amid the dark waste, and the little homestead, the nucleus of some subsequent and valuable inheritance, proclaimed the unceasing toil, the primeval curse, and the sweat of the brow, that was here also.

To enjoy the warmth and freshness of the morning, Alice had removed her spinning-wheel into the porch. Here she was engaged in the primitive and good old fashion of preparing yarn for the wants of the household; — an occupation not then perfected into the system to which it is now degraded. The wives and daughters of the wealthiest would not then disdain to fabricate material for the household linen, carrying us far back into simpler,

if not happier times, when Homer sung, and kings' daughters found a similar employment.

Alice was humming in unison with her wheel, her thoughts more free from the very circumstance that her body was the subject of this mechanical exercise.

"Good morrow, mistress Alice!" said a sonorous voice at the entrance. Turning suddenly, she spied the athletic beggar standing erect, with his staff and satchel, on one side of the porch.

"Ha' ye an awmous to-day, lady?" He doffed his cap and held it forth, more with the air of one bestowing a favour than soliciting one.

"Thou hast been i' the kitchen, I warrant," said Alice, "by the breadth of thy satchel."

"An' what the worse are ye for that?" replied the saucy mendicant; "your hounds and puppies would lick up the leavings, if I did not."

"Go to," said Alice impatiently; "thou dost presume too far to escape correction. Begone!"

"This air, I reckon — ay, this blessed air — is as free unto my use as thine," said Noman sullenly, and without showing any symptoms of obedience.

"My brother shall know of thine insolence, and the menials shall drive thee forth."

"Thy brother! — tell him, pretty maiden, that though he is a lawyer, and his uncle, he who built this house to boot, he hath little left in this misgoverned realm but to deal out injustice. Other folks' money sticks i' their skirts; that have precious little o' their own, I wis."

"I know not the nature of thine allusions, nor care I to bandy weapons with such an adversary."

"Hark ye, lady! it was to solder down as pretty a piece

of roguery as one would wish to leave to one's heirs, that Theophilus Ashton, thine uncle, thy mother's brother, now deceased, went to London, when he had builded this house."

"Roguery! — mine uncle Ashton! Darest thou — ?"

"Ay, the same. The spoils of my patrimony built this goodly dwelling, and the battle of Marston Moor gave thy brother wherewith to buy the remainder of the inheritance. I was made a beggar by my loyalty, he a rich man by his treason."

"What means this foul charge?" said Alice, astounded by the audacity of this accusation.

"But fear not. Had it not been for thee and another, —whose well-being is bound up in thine own, — long ago would this goodly heritage have been spoiled; for — revenge is sweeter even than possession; so good morrow, mistress Alice."

"What, then, is thy business with me?"

"Wentest thou not from the masque with thy pretty love-billet behind thy stomacher?"

"Insolent vagrant, this folly shall not go unpunished!"

"Hold, wench; provoke not an —" He paused for one second, — but in that brief space there came a change over his spirit, which in a moment was subdued as though by some over-mastering effort, — "an impotent old man." His voice softened, and there was a touch even of pathos in the expression. "To-night — fail not — I, ay, even *I*, will protect thee. Fear not; thy welfare hangs on that issue!"

Saying this, with an air of dignity far superior to his usual bluntness and even rudeness of address, he slowly departed. Thoughts crowded, like a honey swarm, to this

hive of mystery, nor could she throw off the impression which clung to her. She had been warned against revealing this communication, but at one time she felt resolved to make her brother acquainted with the whole, and to claim his protection; but then came the warning, or rather threat, of some hidden mischief that must inevitably follow the disclosure. "Surely, in her own home, she might venture to walk unattended. The beggar she had known for some time in his periodical visits; and though she felt an unaccountable timidity in his presence, yet she certainly was minded to make an experiment of the adventure; but —" and in this happy state of doubt and fluctuation she remained until eventide, when a calm bright moon, as it again rose over the hill, saw Alice at the casement of her own chamber, looking thoughtfully, anxiously, down where the dark surface of the stagnant moat wore a bright star on its bosom. The scene, the soft and tender influence which it possessed, — the hour, soothing and elevating the mind, freed from the harassing and petty cares of existence, — to a romantic and imaginative disposition, these were all favourable to its effects, — the developement of that ethereal spirit of our nature, that enchanter, whose wand conjures up the busy world within, creating all things according to his own pleasure, and investing them with every attribute at his will. She felt her fears give way, and her resolution was taken: the die was cast, and she committed herself to the result. What share the handsome, dark, and melancholy looking stranger had in this decision she did not pause to enquire, nor indeed could she have much, if any suspicion of the secret influence he excited. There was danger, and this danger could only be averted by her interference: what

might be curiosity was at any rate her duty; and she, feeling mightily like some devoted heroine, would not shrink from the trial. When once brought to a decision, she felt a load taken from her breast; she breathed more freely, and her tread was more vigorous and elastic. She left her chamber with a lofty mien, and the gentle Alice felt more like the proud mistress of an empire, than the inhabitant of a little country dwelling, when she re-entered the parlour: yet there was a restless glance from her eye, which ever and anon would start aside from visible objects, and wander about, apparently without aim or discrimination. Her brother was busied, happily, with domestic duties, too much engaged to notice any unusual disturbance in her demeanour, and Alice employed her time to little profit, until she heard the appointed signal for rest. As they bade the usual "good-night" her heart smote her: she looked on the unconscious, unsuspecting, aspect of her brother, and the whole secret of her heart was on her tongue: it did not escape her lips; but the tear stood in her eye; and as she closed the door, it sounded like the signal of some long separation, — as though the portal had for ever closed upon her.

Wrapped in a dark mantle, with cap and hood, the maiden stepped forth from her little closet about midnight. She bore a silver lamp, that waved softly in the night wind, as she went with a noiseless, timid step, through the passages to the haunted chamber. The room wherein the beggar slept was somewhat detached from the rest of the dormitories. A low gallery led by a narrow corridor to a flight of some two or three steps into this room, now used for the stowage of lumber. It was said to have been one of the apartments in the old house, forming a sort of

peduncle to the new, not then removed, like a remnant of the shell sticking to the skirts of the new fledged bird. This adjunct, the beggar's dwelling, is now gone. An ancient doorcase, with a grotesque carving, disclosed the entrance. She paused before it, not without a secret apprehension of what might be going on within. For the first time she felt the novelty, not to say imprudence, of her situation, and the unfeminine nature of her exploit. She was just hesitating whether or not to return, when she heard the door slowly open: a tall, gaunt figure looked out, which she immediately recognised to be that of the mendicant. Somewhat re-assured, and her courage strengthened by his appearance, she did not attempt to retreat, but stood silent for a space, and seemingly not a little abashed; yet the purity of her motives, as far as known to herself, soon recurred to her aid, and her proud, and somewhat haughty spirit immediately roused its energies, when she had to cope with difficulty and danger.

"I come to thy den, old man, that I may unriddle thy dark sayings."

"Or rather," replied he slowly, and emphatically, "that thou mayest unriddle that pretty love-billet thou hast read."

"I am here in my brother's house, and surely I have both the right and the power to walk forth unquestioned, or unsuspected of an intrigue or assignation," replied she, quick and tender on the point whereon her own suspicions were disagreeably awakened.

"Come in, lady," said he, "and thou shalt be safe from any suspicions but thine own."

Alice entered, and the door was closed, and bolted. Her feelings were those of uneasiness, not unmixed with

alarm. Before her stood the athletic form of the mendicant: she was at some distance from the rest of the family; — none caring to have their biding-place in the immediate vicinity of the haunted chamber; — in the power, it might be, of this strange and anomalous being. A miserable pallet lay on the floor in one corner, and the room was nearly filled with useless lumber, and the remains of ancient materials from the old apartments. Probably it was from this circumstance that the ghosts had their fancies for this room, haunting the relics of the past, and lingering around their former reminiscences. The light she held gleamed athwart the face of her companion, and his features were strangely significant of some concealed purpose.

"Whom do we meet in this place?" she enquired.

"Prithee wait; thou wilt see anon. But let me counsel thee to remain silent; what thou seest note, but make no reply. Be not afraid, for no harm shall befall thee. But let me warn thee, maiden, that thou shrink not from the trial."

He now slowly retired, and she watched his receding figure until it was hidden behind a huge oaken bedstead, in the corner. But he returned not, and Alice felt terrified at being so unexpectedly left alone. She called out to him, but there was no answer; she sought for some outlet, but no trace was visible whereby he could have departed from the chamber. As she was stooping down, suddenly the light was blown out, and she felt herself seized by invisible hands.

"Be silent for thy life," said a strange whisper in her ear. She was hurried on, through vaults and passages: the cold damp air struck chilly on her; and she felt as

though descending into some unknown depths, beneath the very foundations of her own dwelling. Darkness was still about their steps; but she was borne along, at a swift pace, by persons evidently accustomed to this subterraneous line of communication.

"No harm shall happen thee," said the same whisper in her ear as before. Suddenly, a vivid light flashed out from an aperture or window, and she heard a groaning or rumbling, and the clank of chains; but this was passed, and a pale dull light showed a low vaulted chamber, into which Alice was conveyed. An iron lamp hung from the ceiling, in what seemed to have been one of the cellars of the old house; though she was unaware, beforetime, of such a dangerous proximity. The door was closed upon her, and again she was left alone. So confused and agitated was she for a while, that she felt unable to survey the objects that encompassed her; by degrees, however, she regained sufficient fortitude to make the examination. Her astonishment was extreme, when she beheld, ranged round the vault, coffers full of coin; heaps of surprising magnitude exposed, the least of which would have been a king's ransom; fair and glistering too, apparently fresh from the hands of some cunning artificer. Her curiosity, in some measure, getting the better of her fears, she ventured to touch one of these tempting heaps, — not being sure but that her night visions were answerable for the illusion; — she laid her hand on a hoard of bright nobles: another, and another, succeeded, yet each coffer held some fresh denomination of coin: there were monies of various nations, even to the Spanish pistole and Turkish bezant. Such exhaustless wealth it had never yet entered into her imagination to conceive, —

the very idea was too boundless even for fancy to present. "Surely," thought she, "I am in some fairy palace, where the combined wealth of every clime is accumulated; and the king of the genii, or some old and ugly ogre, has certes fallen in love with me, and means to present it for my dowry." Smiling at this thought, even in the midst of her apprehensions, — for the blow which severed her from her friends was too stunning to be felt immediately in all its rigour, — she stood as one almost transported with admiration and surprise. Yet her situation was far from being either enviable or pleasant, though in the midst of a treasure-house of wealth, that would have made an emperor the richest of his race. No solution that she could invent would at all solve the problem, — no key of interpretation would fit these intricate movements. Here she stood, a prisoner, perhaps, with the other treasures in the vault; and, assuredly, the miser, whosoever he might be, had shown great taste, and judgment too, in the selection. But the crisis was at hand; the door opened; and she heard a footstep behind her; a form stood before her, whom she immediately recognised, and, perhaps, expected. The mysterious stranger was in her presence. With a respectful obeisance, he folded his hands on his bosom; but he spoke not.

"What wouldst thou, — and why this outrage?" enquired she.

The intruder pointed to the surrounding treasures, then to himself; by which she understood (so quickly interpreted is the mute eloquence of passion), that he was in love with her, and devoted them all exclusively to her service. But what answer she gave, permit me, gentle reader, for

a season, to detain; for truly it is an event of so marvellous a nature, whereon our tradition now disporteth itself, that, like an epicure hindering the final disposal of some delicate mouthful, of which, when gulped, he feeleth no more the savour, so we would, in like manner, courteous reader, do thee this excellent service, in order that the sweetness of expectation may be prolonged thereby; and the solution, like a kernel in the shell, not be crushed by being too suddenly cracked.

Turn we now to the inmates at the hall, where, as may easily be understood, there was a mighty stir and commotion, when morning brought the appointed hour, and Mistress Alice came not to the breakfast meal. Her brother was at his wits' end, when the forenoon passed, and still there were no tidings. Messengers were sent far and near, and no place was left untried where it was thought intelligence might be gained. She was not to be found, nor any trace discovered of her departure.

Nicholas was returning from Foxholes, Stubley, and Pike House. Passing, in a disconsolate mood, through the gate leading from the lane to his own porch, he met Noman, apparently departing. The beggar, seeing his approach, assumed his usual stiff and inflexible attitude, pausing ere he passed. A vague surmise, for which he could not account, prompted the suspicions of Nicholas Haworth towards this unimportant personage.

"What is thy business to-day abroad?" he enquired hastily.

"A word in thine ear, master," said the beggar.

"Say on then; and grant that it may have an inkling of my sister!"

"She hath departed."

"That I know. But whither?"

"Ask the little devilkins I saw yesternight. I have told ye oft o' the sights and terrible things that have visited me i' the boggart chamber; and that the ghost begged hard for a victim."

"What! thou dost not surely suppose he hath borne away my sister?"

"I have said it!" replied the mendicant with an air of mystery.

"We'll have the place exorcised, and the spirit laid; and thou—," said Nicholas, pausing, "have a care that we hale thee not before the justice for practising with forbidden and devilish devices."

"I cry thee mercy, Master Haworth; but for what good deed am I to suffer? I have brought luck to thine house hitherto, and what mischief yon ghost hath wrought is none o' my doing. If thou wilt, I can rid thee of his presence, and that speedily, even if 'twere Beelzebub himself."

"But will thy conjurations bring back my sister?" said the wondering, yet half credulous, squire.

"That is more than I can tell. But, to prove that I am not in league with thine enemy, I will cast him out."

"Hath Alice been strangled, or in anywise hurt, by this wicked spirit?"

"Nay," said the beggar solemnly, "I guess not; but I heard him pass by, and the chains did rattle fearfully through mine ears, until I heard them at her bed-chamber. He may have spirited her away to fairy-land for aught I know; and yet she lives!"

"Save us, merciful Disposer of our lot!" said Nicholas, much moved to sorrow at this strange recital, yet in some

wise comforted by the assurance it contained. "We are none of us safe from his visitations, now they are extended hitherto. I dreamt not of danger beforetime, though I have heard sounds, and seen unaccountable things; yet I imagined that in the old chamber, only, he had power to work mischief: and, even there, I did disbelieve much of thy story, as it respected his freaks, and the nature and manner of his visits. The rumblings that I fancied, at times, in the dead of night, were in the end disregarded and almost forgotten."

"I, too, have heard the like, but I knew it was the spirit, and—"

"Beware, old man; for I do verily suspect thee as an abettor of these unlawful practices."

"And so the reward for my testimony is like to end in a lying accusation, and a prison!"

"Canst thou win her back, by driving from me this evil spirit?"

"I can lay the ghost, I tell thee, if thou wilt; but as for the other, peradventure it lieth not within the compass or power of mortal man to accomplish."

"What thou canst, let it be done without delay, for I would fain behold a sight so wonderful; yet will I first take precaution to put thee in durance until it be accomplished; perchance it may quicken thee to this good work: and I do bethink me, too, thou knowest more than thou wouldest fain acknowledge of this evil dealing toward my sister."

The beggar sought not to escape; he knew it would be in vain, for the menials had surrounded them; and he was conveyed to the kitchen, until he should be ready for the important duties he had to perform. To-morrow was

appointed for the trial, but fearful was the night that intervened, — rattling of chains, falling of heavy weights, loud rumblings, as though a coach and six were driving about the premises; these, intermingled with shrieks and howlings, were not confined to the old room, where the beggar lodged as heretofore, but were heard and felt through the whole house. It seemed as though his presence had hitherto confined them to the locality we have named, and that they had burst their bounds on his departure. Little rest had the household on that fearful night, and the morning was welcome to many, who had been terrified so, that they scarcely expected to see the light of another sun.

With the earliest dawn Nicholas Haworth hied him to the kitchen, where the beggar, a close prisoner, was comfortably nestled on his couch.

"What, ho!" said the squire, "thou canst sleep when others be waking. Thy friends have been seeking thee through the night, mayhap. There have been more shaking limbs than hungry stomachs, I trow."

"I know of nought that should keep me waking; my conscience made no echo to the knocking without; and so good morrow, Master Nicholas."

There came one, at this moment, running in, almost breathless, to say, that the cart-horses were all harnessed, and yoked ready in the stable, by invisible hands, and that no one durst take them from their stalls. On the heels of this messenger came another, who shouted out that the bull, a lusty and well-thriven brute, was quietly perched, in most bull-like gravity, upon the hay-mow. It being impossible, or contrary to the ordinary law of gravitation, that he could have thus transported himself,

what other than demon hands could or durst have lifted so ponderous and obstinate a beast into the place? In short, such were the strange and out of the way frolics that had been committed, that Satan and all his company seemed to have been let loose upon the household on this memorable night.

"Thou shalt rid us of these pests, or by the head of St. Nicholas," said his namesake, "the hangman shall singe thy beard for a fumigation."

"Let me go, and the spirit shall not trouble thee."

"Nay, gaffer, thou dost not escape me thus: my sister, we have yet no tidings of her; and, it may be, those followers or familiars of thine can help me to that knowledge."

"I tell thee I 'll lay the ghost while the holly's green, or mire in Dearnly Clough, should it so please thee, Master Nicholas; but I must first be locked up for a space in the haunted chamber alone. Keep watch at both door and loop-hole, if thou see fit; but I gi'e thee my word that I 'll not escape."

"Agreed," said Howarth; "but it shall not avail thee, thou crafty fox, for we will watch, and that right diligently: unless the de'il fly away with thee, thou shalt not escape us."

The bargain was made, and Noman was speedily conducted to the chamber. Sentinels were posted at the door, and round the outside, to prevent either entrance or exit.

A long hour had nigh elapsed, and the watchers were grown weary. Some thought he had gone off in a chariot of smoke through the roof, or in a whirlwind of infernal brimstone; while others, not a few, were out of doors gazing steadfastly up towards the chimneys, ex-

pecting to see him perched there, like a daw or starling, ready for flight. But when the hour was fulfilled, the beggar lifted up the latch, and walked forth alone, without let or molestation.

"Whither away, sir grey-back?" said Nicholas, "and wherefore in such haste? We have a word or so ere thou depart. Art thou prepared?"

"Ay, if it so please thee."

"And when dost thou begin thine exorcism?"

"Now, if so be that thou have courage. But I warn thee of danger therefrom. If thou persist, verily in this chamber shall it be done."

"Then return, — we will follow, — as many as have courage, that is," said Nicholas Haworth, looking round and observing that his attendants, with pale faces, and mewling stomachs, did manifest a wondrous inquietude, and a sudden eagerness to depart. Yet were there some, whose curiosity got the better of their fears, and who followed, or rather hung upon their master's skirts, into the chamber, which, even in the broad and cheerful daylight, looked a gloomy, and comfortless, and unhallowed place. Noman commanded that silence should be kept, that not even a whisper should breathe from other lips than his own. He drew a line with his crutch upon the floor, and forbade that any should attempt to pass this imaginary demarcation. The auditors were all agape, and, but that the door was fastened, some would, doubtless, have gone back, repenting of their temerity.

After several unmeaning mummeries and incantations, the chamber appeared to grow darker, and a low rumbling noise was heard, as from some subterraneous explosion.

"*Dominus vobiscum*," said the necromancer; and a

train of fire leapt suddenly across the room. A groan of irrepressible terror ran through the company; but the exorcist, with a look of reprehension for their disobedience, betook himself again to his ejaculations. Retiring backwards a few paces, to a corner of the room, he gave three audible knocks upon the floor, which, to the astonishment and dismay of the assembly, were distinctly repeated, apparently from beneath. Thrice was this ceremony gone through, and thrice three times was the same answer returned.

"Restless spirit," said the conjuror solemnly, and in a voice and manner little accordant with those of an obscure and unlearned beggar; "why art thou disquieted, and what is the price of thy departure?"

No answer was given, though the question was repeated. The adjurer appeared, for one moment, fairly at a nonplus.

"By thine everlasting doom, I conjure thee, answer me!" Still there was no reply. "Thou shalt not evade me thus," said he, indignant at the slight which was put upon his spells. He drew a little ebony box from his bosom, and, on opening it, smoke issued therefrom, like the smell of frankincense. With this fumigation he used many uncouth and horrible words, hard names, and so forth, which, probably, had no existence save in the teeming issue of his own brain. During this operation groans were heard, at first low and indistinct, then loud and vehement; soon they broke into a yell, so shrill and piercing, that several of the hearers absolutely tried, through horror and desperation, to burst the door; but this was secure, and their egress prevented thereby.

"Now answer me, what thou wouldst have, and tell me the terms of thy departure hence?"

A low murmur was heard. The beggar listened with great attention.

"This wandering ghost avoucheth," said he, after all was silent, "that there be two of them, and that they rest not until they have taken possession of this house, and driven the inhabitants therefrom."

"Hard law this," said Nicholas Haworth; "but, for all their racket, I sha'n't budge."

"Then must they have a sacrifice for the wrong done when they were i' the body; being slain, as they say, by their guardian, a wicked uncle, that he might possess the inheritance."

Again he made question, looking all the while as though talking to something that was present and visible before him.

"What would ye for your sacrifice, evil and hateful things? for I know, in very deed, that ye are not the innocent and heavenly babes whose spirits are now in glory, but devilish creatures who have been permitted to walk here unmolested, for the wickedness that hath been done. Again, I say that your unwillingness sufficeth not, for ye shall be driven hence this blessed day."

Another shriek announced their apprehension at this threat, and again there was a murmuring as before.

"He sayeth," cried the exorcist, after listening awhile, "they must have a living body sacrificed, and in four quarters it must be laid; then shall these wicked spirits not return hither until what is severed be joined together. With this hard condition we must be content."

"Then, by'r lady's grace, if none else there be, thou shalt be the holocaust for thy pains," said Nicholas, "for I think we need not any other. What say ye, shall not

this wizard be the sacrifice, and we then rid the world of a batch of evil things at once?" He looked with a cruel eye upon the mendicant; for he judged that his sister had, in some way or another, fallen a victim to his devilish plots; and he would have thought it little harm to have poured out his blood on the spot. The beggar seemed aware of his danger, but with a loud and peremptory tone he cried, —

"There needeth not so costly an oblation. Bring hither the first brute animal ye behold, any one of you, on crossing the threshold of the porch."

A messenger was accordingly sent, who returned with a barn-door fowl in his hand, a well-fed chanticleer, whose crow that morning had awakened his cackling dames for the last time.

With great solemnity the conjuror went forth from the chamber, and, in the court-yard, the fowl was named "John;" sponsors standing in due form, as at an ordinary baptism. Then the bird was dismembered, or rather divided into four parts, according to the directions they had received. These were afterwards disposed of as follows: — one was buried at Little Clegg, in a field close by, another under one of the hearth-flags in the hall, another at the Beil Bridge, by the river which runs past Belfield, and the remaining quarter under the barn-floor. Nicholas continued to look on with a curious eye, until the ceremony was concluded, when, after a brief pause, he enquired —

"Have there been no tidings yet from Alice? Can thine art not disclose to me whither she be gone?

"The maiden lives," said the beggar doggedly.

"Thou knowest of her hiding, then?" said her brother

sharply, and with a cunning glance directed towards the speaker.

"The spirit said so," replied Noman, as though wishful to evade, or to shrink from, the question.

"And what else?" enquired the other; "for by my halidome, thou stirrest not hence, until she be forthcoming, alive or dead! I do verily suspect, nay, more, I charge thee with forcibly detaining her against her own privity or consent."

The beggar looked steadily upon him, not a whit either moved or abashed at this bold accusation.

"Peradventure thou speakest without heed, and unadvisedly. I tell thee again, thou wouldst have been driven hence ere now, had it not been for others, whom that spirit must obey."

"Who art thou?" said the perplexed enquirer; "for thou art either worse or better than thou seemest."

"Once the rightful heir, now a beggar, in these domains, wrested from me by rapine, and the harpy fangs of injustice, misnamed law. Theophilus Ashton, from whom ye took your share of the inheritance, when death dislodged it from his gripe, won it, himself, most foully from my ancestors; — and have I not a right to hate thee?"

"And so thy vengeance hath fallen upon a defenceless woman?"

"Nay, I said not so; but if I had so minded, I might have been glutted with vengeance, ay, to my heart's core. Hark thee. Secrets I have learnt that will bind the hidden things of darkness, and bow them to my behest. The unseen powers and operations of nature have been open to my gaze. Long ago my converse and companionship were with the learned doctors and sages

of the East. In Spain I have walked in the palace of the Moorish kings, the Alhambra at Grenada; and in Arabia I have learnt the mystic cabala, and worshipped in the temple of the holy prophet!"

"And yet thou comest a beggar to my door! Truly thy spells have profited thee little."

The beggar smiled scornfully. "Riches inexhaustible, unlimited, are mine; while nature is unveiled at my command."

"Thou speakest riddles, old man; or thou dost hug the very spectres of thy brain, which men call madness."

"I am not mad; save it be madness that I have not hurled thee from this thy misgotten heritage. A power of mighty and all-pervading energy hath hindered me, and, it may be, rescued thee from destruction."

"Unto what unknown intercessor do I owe this forbearance?"

"Love!" said the mendicant with an expression of withering and baneful scorn; "a silly hankeing for a puling girl."

"Thee! — in love?"

"And is it so strange, so hard and incapable of belief, that, in a frosty but vigorous age, the sap should be fresh, though the outward trunk look withered and without verdure?"

Nicholas shuddered. A harrowing suspicion crossed him, that his beloved sister had fallen a victim to the lawless passions of this hoary delinquent.

"Thou dost judge wrongfully," said the beggar; "she appertaineth not to me. 'Tis long since I have drunk of that maddening cup, a woman's love. Would that another had not taken its intoxicating draught!"

"Thou but triflest with me," said Haworth; "let the maiden go, or beware my vengeance."

"Thy vengeance! weak, impotent man! what canst thou do? Thy threats I hold lighter than the breath that makes them; thy cajolements I value less than these; and thy rewards — why, the uttermost wealth that thou couldst boast would weigh but as a feather against the riches at my disposal."

"Then give her back at my request."

"I tell thee she is not mine, nor in my charge."

"But thou knowest of her detention, and where she is concealed."

"What if I do? — will that help thee to the discovery?"

"Point out the place, or conduct me thither, and ——"

The mendicant here burst forth into a laugh so tantalising and malicious, that Nicholas, though silent, grew pale with choler.

"Am I a fool," said the exorcist; "an every day fool; a simpleton of such a dastardly condition, that thou shouldest think to whine me from my purpose? — Never."

Scarcely was the word spoken, when a loud and awful explosion shook the building to its foundations. Horror and consternation were seen upon the hitherto composed features of the beggar. He grasped his crutch; and with a yell of unutterable anguish, he cried, "Ruined — betrayed — may the fiends follow ye for this mischance!"

He threw himself almost headlong down the steps, and ran with rapid strides through the yard, followed by Nicholas, who seemed in a stupor of astonishment at these mysterious events.

Passing round to the other side of the house, he saw a smoke rising in a dense unbroken column from an out-

building beyond the moat, towards which Noman was speedily advancing. Suddenly he slackened his pace. He paused, seemingly undecided whither to proceed. He then turned sharply round, and made his way into the kitchen, passing up a staircase into the haunted chamber, still followed by Nicholas Haworth, and not a few who were lookers on, hoping to ascertain the cause of this alarm.

To their great surprise, the beggar hastily displaced some lumber, and raising a trapdoor, quickly disappeared down a flight of steps. With little hesitation, the master followed; and keeping the footsteps of his leader within hearing, he cautiously went forward, convinced that in some way or another this opportune, but inexplicable event, would lead to the discovery of his sister.

Suddenly he heard a shriek. He felt certain it was the voice of Alice. He rushed on; but some unseen barrier opposed his progress. He heard noises and hasty footsteps beyond, evidently in hurry and confusion. The door was immediately opened, and he beheld Noman bearing out the half lifeless form of Alice. Smoke, and even flame, followed hard upon their flight; but she was conveyed upwards to a place of safety.

"There," said the mendicant, when he had laid down his burden, "at the peril of all I possess, and of life too, I have rescued her. My hopes are gone—my schemes forever blasted—and I am a ruined, wretched old man, without a home, or a morsel of bread."

He walked out through the porch, Nicholas being too busily engaged in attending to the restoration of Alice to heed his escape. Two other men, strangers, had before emerged from the avenue. In the confusion of the mo-

ment, their flight was effected, and they were seen no more.

When Alice was sufficiently recovered, Nicholas, to his utter surprise and dismay, learnt that she had been doomed to be imprisoned, even in her own house, until she consented to be the wife of one, whom, however he might have won upon her regard by fair and honest courtship, she hated and repulsed for this traitorous and forcible detention. Yet they had not dared to let her go, lest the secrets of her prison house should be told. The false beggar, whose real name was Clegg, having become an adept in the art of coining, acquired during his residence abroad, and likewise having arrived at the knowledge of many chemical secrets long hidden from the vulgar and uninitiated, had leagued himself with one of the like sort, together with his own son, a handsome, well-favoured youth (whose mother he had rescued from a Spanish convent), for the purpose of carrying on a most extensive manufacture and issue of counterfeit money of several descriptions. His former knowledge, when young, of his ancestors' mansion at Clegg Hall suggested the fitness of this spot for their establishment. Its situation was sequestered; and the ancient vaults, though nearly filled with rubbish, might yet be made available for their purpose. The secret entrance, and, above all, the currently believed story of the ghost, might afford facilities for frightening away those who were disposed to be curious; and any noises unavoidable in the course of their operations might be attributed to this fruitful source of imposture. By a little dexterity, possession of the haunted chamber was obtained, the feigned beggar being a periodical visitant; thence a ready entrance was contrived,

and all materials were introduced that were needful for their fraudulent proceedings. Many months their traffic was carried on without discovery; and in the beggar's wallet counterfeit money to a considerable amount was conveyed, and distributed by other agents into general circulation. Well might he say that boundless wealth was at their command; the means employed in disposing of the proceeds of their ingenuity were well calculated for the purpose. They had proposed, by machinations and alarms, to drive away utterly the present inhabitants and possessors of the Hall. The reign of terror was about to commence, plans being already matured for this purpose, had not the younger Clegg seen Alice Haworth; and love, that mighty controller of human affairs and devices, most inopportunely frustrated their intentions. The elder Clegg, too, was induced to aid the design, hoping that, should a union take place, the inheritance might revert into the old channel. We have seen the result: the wilfulness and obduracy of Alice, and the infatuation of the lover, who had thought to dazzle her with the riches he purposely spread before her, prevented the success of their schemes. She peremptorily refused and repulsed him, accusing him of a gross and wanton outrage. What might have been the end of this contention we know not, seeing that an unforeseen acccident caused the explosion, which led to her escape and the flight of her captors.

What remained of the old house was pulled down. The vaults and cellars, which were found to extend for a considerable distance, even beyond the moat, were walled up, and every vestige that was left, together with an immense hoard of counterfeit money, was completely destroyed.

THE

MERMAID OF MARTIN MEER.

THE MERMAID OF MARTIN MEER.

Little needs to be said by way of introduction or explanation of the following tale. Martin Meer is now in process of cultivation; the plough and the harrow leave more enduring furrows on its bosom. It is a fact, curious enough in connection with our story, that some years ago, in digging and draining, a canoe was found here. How far this may confirm our tradition, we leave the reader to determine. It is scarcely two miles from Southport; and the botanist, as well as the entomologist, would find themselves amply repaid by a visit.

THE MERMAID OF MARTIN MEER.

"Now the dancing sunbeams play
O'er the green and glassy sea:
Come with me, and we will go
Where the rocks of coral grow."

MARTIN MEER, the scene of the following story, we have described in our first series of Traditions, where Sir Tarquin, a carnivorous giant, is slain by Sir Lancelot of the Lake. These circumstances, and more of the like pur-

port on this subject, we therefore omit, as being too trite and familiar to bear repetition. We do not suppose the reader to be quite so familiar with the names and fortunes of Captain Harrington and Sir Ralph Molyneux, though they had the good fortune to be born eleven hundred years later, and to have seen the world, in consequence, eleven hundred years older — we wish we could say wiser and better tempered, less selfish and less disposed to return hard knocks, and to be corrupted with evil communications. But man is the same in all ages. The external habits and usages of society change his mode of action, — clothe the person and passions in a different garb; but their form and substance, like the frame they inhabit, are unchanged, and will continue until this great mass of intelligence, this mischievous compound of good and evil, this round rolling earth, shall cease to swing through time and space — a mighty pendulum, whose last stroke shall announce the end of time, the beginning of eternity!

Our story gets on indifferently the while; but a willing steed is none the worse for halting. Harrington, and his friend Sir Ralph, were spruce and well-caparisoned cavaliers, living often about court, towards the latter end of Charles the Second's reign. What should now require their presence in these extreme regions of the earth, far from society and civilisation, it is not our business to enquire. It sufficeth for our story that they were here, mounted, and proceeding at a shuffling trot along the flat, bare, sandy region we have described.

"How sweetly and silently that round sun sinks into the water!" said Harrington.

"But, doubtless," returned his companion, "if he were

fire, as thou sayest, the liquid would not bear his approach so meekly; why, it would boil, if he were but chin-deep in yon great seething-pot."

"Thou art quicker at a jest than a moral, Molyneux," said the other and graver personage; "thou canst not even let the elements escape thy gibes. I marvel how far we are from our cousin Ireland's at Lydiate. My fears mislead me, or we have missed our way. This flat bosom of desolation hath no vantage-ground whence we may discern our path; and we have been winding about this interminable lake these two hours."

"Without so much as a blade of grass or a tree to say 'Good neighbour' to," said Molyneux, interrupting his companion's audible reverie; — "crows and horses must fare sumptuously in these parts."

"This lake, I verily think, follows us; or we are stuck to its side like a lady's bauble."

"And no living thing to say 'Good b'ye,' were it fish or woman."

"Or mermaid, which is both." Scarcely were the words uttered, when Harrington pointed to the water.

"Something dark comes upon that burning track left on the surface by the sun's chariot wheels."

"A fishmonger's skiff, belike," said Sir Ralph.

They plunged through the deep sandy drifts towards the brink, hastening to greet the first appearance of life which they had found in this region of solitude. At a distance they saw a female floating securely, and apparently without effort, upon the rippling current. Her form was raised half way above the water, and her long hair hung far below her shoulders. This she threw back, at times, from her forehead, smoothing it down with great

dexterity. She seemed to glide on slowly, and without support; yet the distance prevented any very minute observation.

"A bold swimmer, o' my troth!" said Molyneux; "her body tapers to a fish's tail, no doubt, or my senses have lost their use."

Harrington was silent, looking thoughtful and mysterious.

"I'll speak to yon sea-wench."

"For mercy's sake hold thy tongue. If, as I suspect, — and there be such things, 'tis said, in God's creation, — thou wilt ——"

But the tongue of this errant knight would not be stayed; and his loud musical voice swept over the waters, evidently attracting her notice, and for the first time. She threw back her dark hair, gazing on them for a moment, when she suddenly disappeared. Harrington was sure she had sunk; but a jutting peninsula of sand was near enough to have deceived him, especially through the twilight, which now drew on rapidly.

"And thou hast spoken to her!" said he gravely; "then be the answer thine!"

"A woman's answer were easier parried than a sword-thrust, methinks; and that I have hitherto escaped."

"Let us be gone speedily. I like not yon angry star spying out our path through these wilds."

"Thou didst use to laugh at my superstitions; but thine own, I guess, are too chary to be meddled with."

"Laugh at me an' thou wilt," said Harrington: "when Master Lilly cast my horoscope, he bade me ever to eschew travel when Mars comes to his southing, conjunct with the Pleiades, at midnight,— the hour of my birth.

Last night, as I looked out from where I lay at Preston, methought the red warrior shot his spear athwart their soft scintillating light; and, as I gazed, his ray seemed to ride half way across the heavens. Again he is rising yonder."

"And his meridian will happen at midnight?"

"Even so," replied Harrington.

"Then gallop on. I'd rather make my supper with the fair dames at Lydiate, than in a mermaid's hall."

But their progress was a work of no slight difficulty, and even danger. Occasionally plunging to the knees in a deep bog, then wading to the girth in a hillock of sand and prickly bent grass, (the *arundo arenaria*, so plentiful on these coasts,) the horses were scarcely able to keep their footing,—yet were they still urged on. Every step was expected to bring them within sight of some habitation.

"What is yonder glimmer to the left?" said Molyneux. "If it be that hideous water again, it is verily pursuing us. I think I shall be afraid of water as long as I live."

"As sure as Mahomet was a liar, and the pope has excommunicated him from Paradise, 'tis the same still, torpid, dead-like sea we ought to have long since passed."

"Then have our demonstrations been in a circle, in place of a right line, and we are fairly on our way back again."

Sure enough there was the same broad, still surface of the Meer, though on the contrary side, mocking day's last glimmer in the west. The bewildered travellers came to a full pause. They took counsel together, while they rested their beasts and their spur-rowels; but the result was by no means satisfactory. One by one came out the glorious throng above them, until the heavens grew light

with living hosts, and the stars seemed to pierce the sight, so vivid was their brightness.

"Yonder is a light, thank Heaven!" cried Harrington.

"And it is approaching, thank yon stars!" said his companion: "I durst not stir to meet it, through these perilous paths, if our night's lodging depended on it."

The bearer of this welcome discovery was a kind-hearted fisherman, who carried a blazing splinter of antediluvian firewood dug from the neighbouring bog; a useful substitute for more expensive materials.

It appeared they were at a considerable distance from the right path, or indeed from any path that could be travelled with safety, except by daylight. He invited them to a lodging in a lone hut on the borders of the lake, where he and his wife subsisted by eel-catching and other precarious pursuits. The simplicity and openness of his manner disarmed suspicion. The offer was accepted, and the benighted heroes found themselves breathing fish odours and turf smoke for the night, under a shed of the humblest construction. His family consisted of a wife and one child only; but the strangers preferred a bed by the turf embers to the couch that was kindly offered them.

The cabin was built of the most simple and homely materials. The walls were pebble stones from the sea beach, cemented with clay. The roof tree was the wreck of some unfortunate vessel stranded on the coast. The whole was thatched with star-grass or sea-reed, blackened with smoke and moisture.

"You are but scantily peopled hereabouts," said Harrington, for lack of other converse.

"Why — ay," returned the peasant; "but it matters nought; our living is mostly on the water."

"And it might be with more chance of company than

on shore;—we saw a woman swimming, or diving, there not long ago."

"Have ye seen her?" enquired both man and dame with great alacrity.

"Seen whom?" returned their guest.

"The Meer-woman, as we call her."

"We saw a being, but of what nature we are ignorant, float and disappear as suddenly as though she were an inhabitant of yon world of waters."

"Thank Mercy!—then she will be here anon."

Curiosity was roused, though it failed in procuring the desired intelligence. She might be half woman, half fish, for aught they knew. She always came from the water, and was very kind to them and the babe. Such was the sum of the information; yet when they spoke of the child there was evidently a sort of mystery and alarm, calculated to awaken suspicion.

Harrington looked on the infant. It was on the woman's lap asleep, smiling as it lay; and an image of more perfect loveliness and repose he had never beheld. It might be about a twelvemonth old; but its dress did not correspond with the squalid poverty by which it was surrounded.

"Surely this poor innocent has not been stolen," thought he. The child threw its little hands towards him as it awoke; and he could have wept. Its short feeble wail had smitten him to the heart.

Suddenly they heard a low murmuring noise at the window.

"She is there," said the woman; "but she likes not the presence of strangers. Get thee out to her, Martin, and persuade her to come in."

The man was absent for a short time. When he entered,

his face displayed as much astonishment as it was possible to cram into a countenance so vacant.

"She says our lives were just now in danger; and that the child's enemies are again in search; but she has put them on the wrong scent. We must not tarry here any longer; we must remove, and that speedily. But she would fain be told what is your business in these parts, if ye are so disposed."

"Why truly," said Harrington, "our names and occupation need little secrecy. We are idlers at present, and having kindred in the neighbourhood, are on our way to the Irelands at Lydiate, as we before told thee. Verily, there is but little of either favour or profit to be had about court now-a-days. Nought better than to loiter in hall and bower, and fling our swords in a lady's lap. But why does the woman ask? Hath she some warning to us? or is there already a spy upon our track?"

"I know not," said Martin; "but she seems mightily afeard o' the child."

"If she will intrust the babe to our care," said Harrington, after a long pause, "I will protect it. The shield of the Harringtons shall be its safeguard."

The fisherman went out with this message; and on his return it was agreed that, as greater safety would be the result, the child should immediately be given to Harrington. A solemn pledge was required by the unseen visitant, that the trust should be surrendered whenever, and by whomsoever, demanded; likewise a vow of inviolable secrecy was exacted from the parties that were present. Harrington drew a signet from his finger; whoever returned it was to receive back the child. He saw not the mysterious being to whom it was sent; but the idea of the Meer-woman,

the lake, and the untold mysteries beneath its quiet bosom, came vividly and painfully on his recollection.

Long after she had departed, the strange events of the evening kept them awake. Enquiries were now answered without hesitation. Harrington learnt that the "Meer-woman's" first appearance was on a cold wintry day, a few months before. She did not crave protection from the dwellers in the hut, but seemed rather to command it. Leaving the infant with them, and promising to return shortly, she seemed to vanish upon the lake, or rather, she seemed to glide away on its surface so swiftly, that she soon disappeared. Since then she had visited them thrice, supplying them with a little money and other necessaries; but they durst not question her, she looked so strange and forbidding.

In the morning they were conducted to Lydiate by the fisherman, who also carried the babe. Here they told a pitiable story of their having found the infant exposed, the evening before, by some unfeeling mother; and, strange to say, the truth was never divulged until the time arrived when Harrington should render up his trust.

Years passed on. Harrington saw the pretty foundling expand through every successive stage, from infancy to childhood, — lovelier as each year unfolded some hidden grace, and the bloom brightened as it grew. He had married in the interval, but was yet childless. His lady was passionately fond of her charge, and Grace Harrington was the pet and darling of the family. No wonder their love to the little stranger was growing deeper, and was gradually acquiring a stronger hold on their affections. But Harrington remembered his vow: it haunted him like a spectre. It seemed as though written with a sun-

beam on his memory; but the finger of Death pointed to its accomplishment. It will not be fulfilled without blood, was the foreboding that assailed him. His lady knew not of his grief, — ignorant happily of its existence, and of its source.

Their mansion stood on a rising ground, but a few miles distant from the lake. He thus seemed to hover instinctively on its precincts; though, in observance of his vow, he refrained from visiting that lonely hut, or enquiring about its inhabitants. Its broad smooth bosom was ever in his sight; and when the sun went down upon its wide brim, his emotion was difficult to conceal.

One soft, clear evening, he sat enjoying the calm atmosphere, with his lady and their child. The sun was nigh setting, and the lake glowed like molten fire at his approach.

"'Tis said a mermaid haunts yon water," said Mrs. Harrington; "I have heard many marvellous tales of her, a few years ago. Strange enough, last night I dreamed she took away our little girl, and plunged with her into the water. But she never returned."

"How I should like to see a mermaid!" said the playful girl. "Nurse says they are beautiful ladies with long hair, and green eyes. But,"—and she looked beseechingly towards them, — "we are always forbidden to ramble towards the Meer."

"Harrington, the night wind makes you shiver. You are ill!"

"No, my love. But — this cold air comes wondrous keen across my bosom," said he, looking wistfully on the child, who, scarcely knowing why, threw her little arms about his neck, and wept.

"My dream, I fear, hath strange omens in it," said the lady thoughtfully.

The same red star shot fiercely up from the dusky horizon; the same bright beam was on the wave; and the mysterious incidents of the fisherman's hut came like a track of fire across Harrington's memory.

"Yonder is that strange woman again, that has troubled us about the house these three days," said Mrs. Harrington, looking out from the balcony; "we forbade her yesterday. She comes hither with no good intent."

Harrington looked over the balustrade. A female stood beside a pillar, gazing intently towards him. Her eye caught his own; it was as if a basilisk had smitten him! Trembling, yet fascinated, he could not turn away his glance; a smile passed on her dark red visage, — a grin of joy at the discovery.

"Surely," thought he, "'tis not the being who claims my child!" But the woman drew something from her hand, which, at that distance, Harrington recognised as his pledge; his lady saw not the signal; without speaking, he obeyed. Hastening down stairs, a private audience confirmed her demand, which the miserable Harrington durst not refuse.

Two days he was mostly in private. Business with the steward was the ostensible motive. He had sent an urgent message to his friend Molyneux, who, on the third day, arrived at H——, where they spent many hours in close consultation. The following morning, Grace came running in after breakfast. She flung her arms about his neck.

"Let me not leave you to-day," she sobbed aloud.

"Why, my love?" said Harrington, strangely disturbed at the request.

"I do not know!" replied the child, pouting.

"To-day, I ride out with Sir Ralph to the Meer; and, as thou hast often wished — because it was forbidden, I guess, — thou shalt ride with us a short distance; I will toss thee on before me, and away we'll gallop, — like the Prince of Trebizond on the fairy horse."

"And shall we see the mermaid?" said the little maiden quickly, as though her mind had been running on the subject.

"I wish the old nurse would not put such foolery in the girl's head," said Mrs. Harrington impatiently. "There be no mermaids now, my love."

"What — not the mermaid of Martin Meer?" enquired the child, seemingly disappointed.

Harrington left the room, promising to return shortly.

The morning was dull, but the afternoon broke out calm and bright. Grace was all impatience for the ride; and Rosalind, the favourite mare, looked more beautiful than ever in her eyes. She bounded down the terrace at the first sound of the horses' feet, leaving Mrs. Harrington to follow.

The cavaliers were already mounted, but the child suddenly drew back.

"Come, my love," said Harrington, stretching out his hand; "look, how your pretty Rosalind bends her neck to receive you."

Seeing her terror, Mrs. Harrington soothed these apprehensions, and fear was soon forgotten amid the pleasures she anticipated.

"You are back by sunset, Harrington?"

"Fear not, *I* shall return," replied he; and away sprang the pawing beasts down the avenue. The lady lingered until they were out of sight. Some unaccountable oppression weighed down her spirits; she sought her chamber, and a heavy sob threw open the channel which hitherto had restrained her tears.

They took the nearest path towards the Meer, losing sight of it as they advanced into the low flat sands, scarcely above its level. When again it opened into view, its wide, waveless surface lay before them, reposing in all the sublimity of loneliness and silence. The rapture of the child was excessive. She surveyed with delight its broad unruffled bosom, giving back the brightness and glory of that heaven to which it looked; to her it seemed another sky, and another world, pure and spotless as the imagination that created it.

They entered the fisherman's hut; but it was deserted. Years had probably elapsed since the last occupation. Half-burnt turf and bog-wood lay on the hearth; but the walls were crumbling down with damp and decay.

The two friends were evidently disappointed. At times they looked out, anxiously, — but in vain, as it might seem; for they again sat down, silent and depressed, upon a turf heap by the window, while the child ran playing and gambolling towards the beach.

Harrington sat with his back to the window, when, suddenly, the low murmuring noise he had heard on his former visit was repeated. He turned pale.

"Thou art not alone; and where is the child?" or words to this purport were uttered in a whisper. He started aside; the sound, as he thought, was close to his ear: Molyneux heard it too.

"Shall I depart?" said he, cautiously; "I will take care to keep within call."

"Nay," said his friend, whispering in his ear, "thou must ride out of sight and sound too, I am afraid, or we shall not accomplish our plans for the child's safety. Depart with the attendants; I fear not the woman. Say to my lady, I will return anon."

With some reluctance Sir Ralph went his way homewards, and Harrington was left to accomplish these designs without assistance.

Immediately he walked out towards the shore; but he saw nothing of the child, and his heart misgave him. He called her; but the sound died, with its own echo, upon the waters. The timid rabbit fled to its burrow, and the sea-gull rose from her gorge, screaming away heavily to her mate, — but the voice of his child returned no more!

Almost driven to frenzy, he ran along the margin of the lake to a considerable distance, returning, after a fruitless search, to the hut, where he threw himself on the ground. In the agony of his spirit, he lay with his face to the earth, as if to hide his anguish as he wept.

How long he remained was a matter of uncertainty. On a sudden, instantaneously with the rush that aroused him, he felt his arms pinioned, and that by no timid or feeble hand. At the same moment, a bandage was thrown over his eyes, and he found himself borne away swiftly into a boat. He listened for some time to the rapid stroke of the oars. Not a word was spoken from which he could ascertain the meaning of this outrage. To his questions no reply was vouchsafed, and in the end he forebore enquiry, for the mind wearied into apathy by excitement, and its consequent exhaustion.

The boat again touched the shore, and he was carried out. The roar of the sea had for some time been rapidly growing louder as they neared the land. He was now borne along, over hillocks of loose sand, to the sea beach, when he felt himself fairly launched upon the high seas. He heard the whistling of the cordage, the wide sail flap to the wind, with the groan of the blast as it rushed into the swelling canvass; then he felt the billows prancing under him, and the foam and spray from their huge necks as they swept by. It was not long ere he heard the sails lowered; and presently they were brought up alongside a vessel of no ordinary bulk. Harrington was conducted with little ceremony into the cabin; the bandage was removed from his eyes, and he found himself in the presence of a weather-beaten tar, who was sitting by a table, on which lay a cutlass and a pair of richly embossed pistols.

"We have had a long tug to bring thee to," said the captain; "but we always grapple with the enemy in the long run. If thou hast aught to say why sentence of death should not pass on thee,—ay, and be executed straightway too,—say on. What! not a shot in thy locker? Then may all such land-sharks perish, say I, as thus I signify thy doom." He examined his pistols with great nicety as he spoke. Harrington was dumb with amazement, whilst his enemy surveyed him with a desperate and determined glance: at length he stammered forth,

"I am ignorant of thy meaning; much less can I shape my defence. Who art thou?"

The other replied, in a daring and reckless tone,

"I am the Free Rover, of whom thou hast doubtless

heard. My good vessel, and her gallant crew, ne'er slackened a sky-raker in the chase, nor backed a mainsail astern of the enemy. But, pirate as I am, — hunted and driven forth, like the prowling wolf, without the common rights and usages of my fellow men, — I have yet their feelings. I *had* a child! Thy fell, unpitying purpose, remorseless monster, hath made me childless! But thou hast robbed the lioness of her whelp, and thou art in her gripe!"

"As my hope is to escape thy fangs, I am innocent of the crime."

"May be thou knowest not the mischief thou hast inflicted; but thy guilt, and my bereavement, are not the less. My child was ailing; we were off this coast, when we sent her ashore, secretly, until our return. A fisherman and his wife, to whom our messenger intrusted the babe, were driven forth by thee one bitter night, without a shelter. The child perished! and its mother chides my tardy revenge."

"'Tis a falsehood!" cried Harrington, "told to cover some mischievous design. The child, if it be thine, was given to my care, — by whom I know not. I have nurtured her kindly: not three hours ago, as I take it, she was in yonder hut; but she has been decoyed from me; and I am here, thy prisoner, and without the means of clearing myself from this false and malicious charge."

The captain smiled incredulously.

"Thou art lord of yonder soil, I own; but thou shouldest have listened to the cry of the helpless. I have here a witness who will prove thy story false — the messenger herself. Call hither Oneida," said he, speaking to the attendants. But this personage could not be found.

"She is gone ashore in her canoe," said the pirate; "and the men never question her. She will return ere mid-watch. Prepare: thou shewedst no mercy, and I have sworn!"

Harrington was hurried to a little square apartment, which an iron grating sufficiently indicated to be the state prison. The vessel lay at anchor; the intricate soundings on that dangerous coast rendered her perfectly safe from attack, even if she had been discovered. He watched the stars rising out, calm and silently, from the deep: "Ere yon glorious orb is on the zenith," thought he, "I may be — what!" He shrunk from the conclusion. "Surely the wretch will not dare to execute his audacious threat!" He again caught that red and angry star gleaming portentously on him. It seemed to be his evil genius; its malignant eye appeared to follow out his track, to haunt him, and to beset his path continually with suffering and danger. He stood by the narrow grating, feverish and apprehensive; again he heard that low murmuring voice, which he too painfully recognised. The mysterious being of the lake stood before him.

"White man," she spoke in a strange and uncouth accent; "the tree bows to the wing of the tempest — the roots look upward — the wind sighs past its withered trunk — the song of the warbler is heard no more from its branches, and the place of its habitation is desolate. Thine enemies have prevailed. I did it not to compass thine hurt: I knew not, till now, thou wert in their power; and I cannot prevent the sacrifice.

"Restore the child, and I am safe," said Harrington,

trembling in his soul's agony at every point; "or withdraw thy false, thine accursed accusations."

"Thou knowest not my wrongs, and my revenge! Thou seest the arrow, but not the poison that is upon it. The maiden, whose race numbers a thousand warriors, returns not to her father's tribe, ere she wring out the heart's life-blood from her destroyer. Death were happiness to he torments I inflict on him, and the woman who hath upplanted me. I And yet they think Oneida loves them, bends like the bulrush when the wind blows upon her, nd rises only when he departs. What! give back the hild? She hath but taken my husband and my bed;— s soon might ye tear the prey from the starved hunter. This night will I remove their child from them,— to depart, when a few moons are gone,—it may be, to dwell again with my tribe in the wigwam and the forest."

"But I have not wronged thee!"

"Thou art of their detested race. Yet would I not kill thee!"

"Help me to escape."

"Escape!" said this untamed savage, with a laugh which went with a shudder to his heart. "As soon might the deer dart from the hunter's rifle, as thou from the cruel pirate who has pronounced thy death! I could tell thee such deeds of him and these bloody men, as would freeze thy bosom, though it were wide and deep as the lakes of my country. Yet I loved him once! He came a prisoner to my father's hut. I have spilled my best blood for his escape. I have borne him where the white man's feet never trod,—through forests, where aught but the Indian or the wild beast would have perished. I left my country and my kin,— the graves of my fathers! — and how hath

he requited me? He gave the ring of peace to the red woman; but when he saw another, and a fairer one of thy race, she became his wife; and from that hour Oneida's love was hate! — and I have waited, and not complained, for my revenge was sure! And shall I now bind the healing leaf upon the wound? — draw the arrow from the flesh of mine enemies? Thou must die! for my revenge is sweet."

"I will denounce thee to him, fiend!" I will reveal —!"

"He will not believe thee. His eye and ear are sealed. He would stake his life on my fidelity. He knows not of the change."

"But he will discover it, monster, when thou art gone. He will track thee to the verge of this green earth and the salt sea, and thou shalt not escape."

With a yell of unutterable scorn she cried,

"He may track the wild bee to its nest, and the eagle to his eyrie, but he discerns not one foot-print of Oneida's path!"

The pangs of death seemed to be upon him. He read his doom in the kindling eye and almost demoniac looks of the being who addressed him. She seemed like some attendant demon, waiting to receive his spirit. His brain grew dizzy. Death would have been welcome, in comparison with the horrors of its anticipation. He would have caught her; but she glided from his grasp, and he was again left in that den of loneliness and misery. How long he knew not; his first returning recollection was the sound of bolts, and the rude voice of his gaolers.

In this extremity, the remembrance of that Being in whom, and from whom, are all power and mercy, flashed

on his brain like a burst of hope,—like a sunbeam on the dark ocean of despair.

"God of my fathers, hear!" escaped from his lips in that appalling moment. His soul was calmed by the appeal. Vain was the help of man, but he felt as if supported and surrounded by the arm of Omnipotence, while silently, and with a firm step, he followed his conductors.

One dim light only was burning above. Some half-dozen of the crew stood armed on the quarter-deck behind their chief; their hard, forbidding faces looked without emotion upon this scene of unpitying, deliberate murder.

To some question from the pirate, Harrington replied by accusing the Indian woman of treachery.

"As soon yonder star, which at midnight marks our meridian, would prove untrue in its course."

Harrington shuddered at this ominous reference.

"I cannot prove mine innocence," said he; "but I take yon orb to witness that I never wronged you or yours. The child is in her keeping."

"Call her hither, if she be returned," said the captain, "and see if he dare repeat this in her presence. He thinks to haul in our canvass until the enemy are under weigh, and then, Yoh ho, boys, for the rescue. But we shall be dancing over the bright Solway ere the morning watch, and thy carcass in the de'il's locker."

"If not for mine, for your own safety!"

"My safety! and what care I, though ten thousand teeth were grinning at me, through as many port-holes. My will alone bounds my power. Who shall question my sentence, which is death!"

He gnashed his teeth as he went on. "And your halls shall be too hot to hold your well-fed drones. Thy

hearth, proud man, shall be desolate. I'll lay waste thy domain. Thy race, root and branch, will I extinguish; for thou hast made me childless!"

The messenger returned with the intelligence that Oneida was not in the ship.

"On shore again, the ——! If I were to bind her with the main-chains, and an anchor at each leg, she would escape me to go ashore. No heed;—we will just settle the affair without her, and he shall drop quietly into a grave ready-made, and older than Adam. I would we had some more of his kin; they should swing from the bow-sprit, like sharks and porpoises, who devour even when they have had enough, and waste what they can't devour."

"Thou wilt not murder me thus, defenceless, and in cold blood."

"My child was more helpless, and had not injured *thee!* Ye give no quarter to the prowling beast, and yet, like me, he only robs and murders to preserve his life. How far is it from midnight?"

"Five minutes, and yon star comes to his southing," said the person he addressed.

"Then prepare; that moment marks thy death!"

The men looked significantly towards their rifles.

"Nay," cried this bloodthirsty freebooter, "my arm alone shall avenge my child."

He drew a pistol from his belt.

"Yonder is Oneida," sung out the man at the main-top; "she is within a cable's length."

"Heed her not. When the bell strikes, I have sworn thou shalt die!"

A pause ensued,—a few brief moments in the lapse of time, but an age in the records of thought. Not a breath

relieved the horror and intensity of that silence. The plash of a light oar was heard;—a boat touched the vessel. The bell struck.

"Once!" shouted the fierce mariner, and he raised his pistol with the sharp click of preparation.

"Twice!"

The bell boomed again.

"Thrice!"

"Hold!" cried a female, rushing between the executioner and the condemned. But the warning was too late;—the ball had sped, though not to its mark. Oneida was the victim. She fell, with a faint scream, bleeding on the deck. But Harrington was close locked in the arms of his little Grace. She had flown to him for protection, sobbing with joy.

The pirate seemed horror-struck at the deed. He raised Oneida, unloosing his neckcloth to staunch the wound.

"The Great Spirit calls me;" she spoke with great exertion: "the green woods, the streams, land of my forefathers.—Oh! I come!" she raised herself suddenly, and with great energy, looking towards Harrington, who yet knelt, guarded and pinioned,—the child still clinging to him.

"White man, I have wronged thee, and I am the sacrifice. Murderer, behold thy child!" She raised her eyes suddenly towards the pirate, who shook his head, supposing that her senses grew confused.

"It was for thy rescue," again she addressed Harrington, "The Great Spirit appeared to me: he bade me restore what I had taken away, and I should be with the warriors and the chiefs who have died in battle. They

hunt in forests from which the red deer flies not, and fish in rivers that are never dry. But my bones shall not rest with my fathers!—I come.—Lake of the woods, farewell."

She threw one look of reproach on her destroyer, and the spirit of Oneida had departed.

The pirate stood speechless and bewildered. He looked on the child,—a ray of recollection seemed to pass over his visage. Its expression was softened; and this man of outlawry and blood became gentle. The savage grew tame. The common sympathies of his nature, so long dried up, burst forth; and the wide deep flood of feeling and affection rolled on with it like a torrent, gathering strength by its own accumulation.

Years after, in a secluded cottage, by the mansion of the Harringtons, dwelt an old man and his daughter. She soothed the declining hours of his sojourn. His errors and his crimes,— and they were many and aggravated,— were not unrepented of. She watched his last breath; and the richest lady of that land was "THE PIRATE'S DAUGHTER."

GEORGE FOX.

GEORGE FOX.

On the eastern side of Swart Moor, about a mile from Ulverstone, stands Swartmoor Hall. This bleak elevation took its name from Colonel Martin Swart, or Swartz, an experienced and valiant soldier, of a noble German family, to whom the Duchess of Burgundy, in 1486, entrusted the command of the troops which were sent to support Lambert Simnel in his claim to the English crown. A more detailed account of this transaction will be found in the first volume of our present series, in the tradition relating to "The Pile of Fouldrey." Suffice it to say, that the rebel army was defeated here with great slaughter; and Swartz, along with several of the English nobility, was slain, — an event which entailed the name of this chieftain on the place of his overthrow.

The hall, about 180 years ago, was the residence of Thomas Fell, commonly called Judge Fell, vice-chancellor of the Duchy Court at Westminster, and one of the judges that went the Welch circuit; a man greatly esteemed, both in his public and private capacity. His wife was a lady of exemplary piety: she was born at Marsh Grange, in the parish of Dalton, in the year 1614, and was mar-

ried before she had attained to the age of eighteen. The Judge and his lady being greatly respected, and much hospitality being displayed in their house to ministers and religious people, George Fox, in the year 1652, on his first coming into Furness, called at Swartmoor Hall, and preaching there, and also at Ulverstone, Mrs. Fell, her daughters, and many of the family, adopted his principles. The Judge was then upon the circuit. On his return he seemed much afflicted and surprised at this revolution in his family; and, in consequence of some malicious insinuations from those who met him with the intelligence, he was greatly exasperated against George Fox and his principles. By the prudent intervention of two friends, however, his displeasure was greatly mitigated; and Fox, returning hither in the evening, answered all his objections in so satisfactory a manner, that the Judge "assented to the truth and reasonableness thereof;" the tranquillity of the family was restored; and from that time, notwithstanding numerous attempts to detach him from the cause, he continued a steady friend to the members of the society, and its founder, on all occasions where he had the power. A weekly meeting was established in his house the following Sunday. But his patronage did not last many years; he departed this life in September, 1658, his health having been for some time before considerably on the decline.

Mrs. Fell, after his death, suffered much inconvenience and oppression, because of the religious principles she had embraced; yet, notwithstanding, the weekly meetings continued to be held at her house, until the year 1690, when a new meeting-house was opened, about a quarter of a mile distant.

In 1669, eleven years after the death of Judge Fell, she married George Fox, whom she survived eleven years, dying at Swartmoor Hall, in February, 1702, nearly eighty-eight years old.*

The house is still inhabited, though in a very dilapidated condition. The barns and stables by which it is surrounded, and the litter of the farm-yard, give it a very mean and undignified appearance. The tenant is a substantial farmer, who is very assiduous in showing the premises. The hall is spacious, with an oaken wainscoting. The bedrooms, which are large and airy, were formerly ornamented with carved work, now greatly damaged. In one of them is a substantial bedstead, with carved posts, on which, it is said, this reformer used to repose, and any of his followers have permission to occupy it for one night. This privilege is either not known, or perhaps not very highly appreciated, for the tenant states that not a single "Friend" has availed himself of it during the whole time he has resided there. Here is shown the study of George Fox, in all its pristine plainness and simplicity. On one side of the hall is an orchard, looking almost coeval with the building. The house stands high, and the upper windows command an extensive and beautiful prospect. The meeting-house is a neat plain building, in perfect repair, still used by the Friends at Ulverstone and the neighbourhood for religious worship. Over the door is the following inscription, "*Ex dono G. F.* 1688." There is a burial-place, surrounded with trees, attached to the chapel.

George Fox did not reside constantly at Swartmoor

* Vide West's Antiquities of Furness.

after his marriage. The greater part of his time was spent in itinerancy. He travelled nearly over the whole of Great Britain, and several parts of America, in the exercise of his ministry. After encountering innumerable sufferings, oppositions, and afflictions, this indefatigable missionary departed this life on the 13th of November, 1690, in the 67th year of his age, at a house in White Hart Court, London. He was interred in the "Friends' Burying Ground," near Bunhill Fields.

The author is aware that the following remarkable account of "a special interposition" has been attributed to other names and later dates, and is recorded as having happened to individuals at different places both in England and Ireland. The same fact, attaching itself to different localities and persons, — probably according to the caprice or partialities of the several narrators, — is, as he has found in the course of his researches, no unusual occurrence. He does not attempt to decide in favour of any of the conflicting claims or authorities, but merely to give the tale as it exists, selecting those places and circumstances which are most suitable for his purpose.

GEORGE FOX.

"O Thou, who every thought pervades,
My darken'd soul inform:
With equal hand thy goodness guides
A planet or a worm."

THE supremacy of a special Providence, guiding and overruling the affairs of men, is a doctrine which few will have the hardihood to withstand, and still less to deny. It is interwoven with our very nature, and seems implanted in us for the wisest and most beneficent of purposes. It is a doctrine full of comfort and consolation; our stay and succour in the most appalling extremities. There does seem, at times, vividly bursting through the

most important periods of our existence, a ray from the secret place of the Most High. We see an opening, as it were, into the very arrangements and councils of the skies; we catch a glimpse of the machinery by which the universe is governed; the wheels of Providence are, for a moment, exhibited, palpable and unincumbered by secondary causes, while we, stricken prostrate from the consciousness of our own insignificance, acknowledge, with awe and admiration, the protecting power of which we are so unworthy.

Of the special interference we have just noticed, the following narrative, true as to the more important particulars, is a striking instance; events, apparently happening out of the ordinary way, seem brought about by this direct interposition, at a period when the most eminent display of human foresight and sagacity would have been unavailing.

One chill and misty evening, in the year 1652, being the early part of a wet, and, as it proved, a tardy spring, two strangers were benighted in attempting to cross the wild mountain ridge, called Cartmel Fell. They had purposed taking the most direct route from Kendal to Cartmel; having, however, missed the few points which indicated their track, they had for several hours been beating about in the expectation of finding some clue to extricate themselves, but every attempt seemed only to fix them more inextricably in a state of doubt and bewilderment. A dense fog had been rapidly accumulating, and they began to feel something startled with a vague apprehension of a night-watch amongst the hills, unprovided as they were with the requisite essentials for either food or lodging.

The elder of the two, though not more than midway

between thirty and forty years old, was clad in a strange uncouth garb, of the coarsest materials, and his lank long hair hung matted and uncombed upon his shoulders, from a "brim" of extravagant dimensions. This style of dress was not then recognised as the distinctive badge of a religious sect, as it is now, of the people called "Quakers," or, as they are more favourably designated, "Friends." The person of whom we speak was the founder of this society, George Fox; who, only about five years previous to the date of our story, after much contemplation on religious subjects, took upon himself the public ministry. In the year 1650, he was imprisoned at Derby, for speaking publicly in the church after Divine service: on being brought before a magistrate, he bade the company "*tremble at the word of the Lord;*" the expression was turned into ridicule, and he and his friends received the appellation of "*Quakers.*"

His appearance was stout and muscular; and his general demeanour of that still undisturbed aspect which, if not one of the essentials of his own religion, is, at least, looked upon as its greatest ornament, betokening the inward grace of a meek and quiet spirit. "He was," says John Gough, the historian of this people, "a man of strong natural parts, firm health, undaunted courage, remarkable disinterestedness, inflexible integrity, and distinguished sincerity. The tenor of his doctrine, when he found himself concerned to instruct others, was, to wean men from systems, ceremonies, and the outside of religion in every form, and to lead them to an acquaintance with themselves by a most solicitous attention to what passed in their own minds; to direct them to a principle of their own hearts, which, if duly attended to, would introduce rectitude of mind, simplicity of manners, a life and con-

versation adorned with every Christian virtue, and peace, the effect of righteousness. Drawing his doctrine from the pure source of religious truth, the New Testament, and the conviction of his own mind, abstracted from the comments of men, he asserted the freedom of man in the liberty of the Gospel against the tyranny of custom, and against the combined powers of severe persecution, the greatest contempt, and keenest ridicule. Unshaken and undismayed, he persevered in disseminating principles and practices conducive to the present and everlasting well-being of mankind, with great honesty, simplicity, and success."

The companion of this reformer was arrayed in a more worldly suit; a mulberry-coloured cloak and doublet, with a hat of grey felt, that, for brevity of brim, would almost have vied with that of the brass basin worn by the knight of the rueful countenance, whose history may be consulted at length in the writings of that veracious historian, Don Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra. His movements were of a more irregular and erratic nature than comported with the well-ordered and equable gait of his companion. The rarely occurring remarks of the latter were any thing but explicit as to the state of his feelings in contemplation of an event, the possibility of which increased with every step, — a night's lodging in these inhospitable wilds. The sun was now evidently beneath the horizon: darkness came on with frightful rapidity; and they had, as yet, no reason to divest themselves of so disagreeable an anticipation. To one in the full glare of daylight, or with a sound roof-tree over his head, and a warm fire at his elbow, the idea of a night-vigil may not appear either unpleasant or extraordinary; but, wrapped in a sheet of grey mist, the wet heath oozing beneath his

feet, with the cold and benumbing air of the hills for his supper, there could be little question that he would be apt to regard it as a condition not far removed from the extremity of human suffering; especially if at the same time he had just exchanged a snug fireside, and an affectionate neighbourhood of friends, for these appalling discomforts.

"I know not what we shall do," said the younger traveller. "It never entered into my head, beforehand, to imagine the possibility of such an event. Surely,—surely,—we are not to live through a whole night in these horrid wilds. Pray, do speak out; and let me, at least, have the comfort of a complaint, for we are past consolation."

"I have been ruminating on this very matter," replied the other; "and it does appear that we are as safe in this place, verily, as though we were encompassed with walls and bulwarks. Methinks, friend, thou speakest unadvisedly; in future, when thee knowest not what to do,—wait! The more thee pulls and hauls, and frets and kicks, depend on it thou wilt be the less able to extricate thyself thereby. We are not left quite without comfort in this dreary wilderness; here is a goodly and a well-set stone, I perceive, just convenient. Verily, it is a mercy if we get a little rest for our limbs. Many a meek and holy disciple, of whom the world was not worthy, has, ere now, been fain of a slice of hard rock for his pillow."

"And, in truth, we are as likely as the holiest of 'em to refresh ourselves all night on a stone bolster," pettishly replied the unthankful youth as he seated himself beside his friend.

It was not long ere a slight breeze began to roll the

mist, into irregular masses of cloud. The dense atmosphere appeared to break, and a star twinkled, for a moment, but disappeared as suddenly as it came forth. Ralph Seaton, the younger of the pedestrians, pointed out the friendly visitant to his companion. It seemed as though the eye of mercy were beaming visibly upon them.

"I have seen it," said the man of quiet endurance; "and now gird up thy loins to depart. The fog will rapidly disperse; and it may be that some distant light will guide us to rest and shelter."

While he was speaking, the mist coiled upwards, driving rapidly across the sky in the shape of a heavy scud. A few stars twinkled here and there through the lucid intervals, "few and far between;" but they were continually changing place, closing and unfolding, as the wind mingled or separated their shapeless fragments.

"It is even as I said. Seest thou yonder light?"

"I see not any thing," replied Seaton.

"Just beneath that bright star to our left?" again enquired the elder traveller.

"I only see a dark hill rising there abruptly against the lowering swell of the sky."

Our "Friend" was silent for a space, when he replied, in a tone of deep solemnity, —

"It is the inward light of which I have spoken to thee before; a token of no ordinary import. To-night, or I am deceived, we are called on to pass through no common allotment of toil and tribulation. Oft hath this light been outwardly manifest, and as often has it been the precursor of some sharp and fiery trial! Again! But thou seest it not. Yet mayest thou follow in my steps. Take

heed thou turn not either to the right hand or to the left. But —" The speaker's voice here grew fearfully ominous and emphatic.

"Hast thou courage to do as I shall bid thee? I must obey the will of the Spirit; but unless thou hast faith to follow the light that is within me, rather pass the night on that cold unsheltered rock, than draw back from His witness. Remember, it is no slight peril that awaits us."

Not without a struggle, and certain waverings, which indicated a faith somewhat less implicit than was desirable on such an occasion, did the disciple promise to obey, — ay, to the very letter, — every command that might be given. Peradventure a well-founded apprehension of spending the night companionless on the cold and wet dormitory to which his evil stars had conducted him, had some influence in this determination. Suffice it to say, never did disciple resolve more faithfully to obey, than did our young adventurer in this perilous extremity.

Their path now appeared to wind precipitately down a steep and narrow defile, through which a rapid torrent was heard foaming and tumbling over its rugged bed. Following the course of the stream to a considerable distance, a rude bridge was discerned, sufficiently indicating a path to some house or village in that direction. The wind was rising in sharp and heavy gusts. The moon, not yet above the hills, was brightening the dark clouds that hung behind them, like a huge curtain. The sky was studded, in beauteous intervals, with hosts of stars. This light enabled them to follow a narrow foot-path, which, abruptly turning the head of a projecting crag, showed them a distant glimmer, as though from

some friendly habitation. Seaton bounded past his more recondite companion; and it was not long ere a fierce growl challenged him, as he approached nearer to the dwelling. He threw open the door, and discovered what was sufficiently distinguishable as a public house, a homely interior, dignified by the name of tavern. Two grim-looking men sat before a huge pile of turf, glowing fiercely from the wide expanse appropriated to several uses beside that of fire-place and chimney. Liquor and coarse bread was near them, on a low three-legged table; while Seaton, overjoyed at his good fortune and happy escape, thought the rude hut a palace, and the smell of turf and oat-cake a refection fit for the gods.

"Be quiet, Vixen." The fierce animal, at this rebuke from her mistress, slunk into a dark corner beside the chimney, whence two hideous and glaring eyes were fixed on the strangers for the rest of the evening. Wherever Seaton turned, he still beheld them, intently watching, as though gloating on their prey. The female who had thus spoken, did not welcome her guests with that cheerful solicitude which the arrival of profitable customers generally creates. She bustled about unceasingly; but showed neither anxiety nor inclination to offer them any refreshment. Short and firm-set in person, she looked more muscular than was befitting her sex. Her hair was grizzled, and the straggling tresses hung untrammelled about her smoke-dried and hard-lined visage. Her features wore a dubious and unpleasant aspect, calculated to create more distrust than seemed desirable to their owner. Every effort, however, to disguise their expression, only rendered them the more forbidding and repulsive.

Near the turf-stack, by the chimney, sat a being, to all appearance in a state of mental derangement, almost approaching to idiotcy. His eye rested for a moment, with a vacant and undefined stare, upon the strangers; then, with a loud shrill laugh, which made the listeners shudder, he again bent his head, basking moodily before the blaze. The moment Seaton had thrown down a light portmanteau that he carried, the dame, with a low tap, summoned two stout fellows from an inner room, who, with a suspicious and over-acted civility, enquired the destination and wishes of their guests. The elder of the travellers, now coming forward as spokesman, enquired about the possibility of obtaining lodgings for the night, and was informed that a room, detached from the rest, was generally used as a guest-chamber on all extra occasions.

"There's a bed in't fit to streek down the limbs of a king," said one of the gruff helpers; "and may be the gentlemen will sleep as sound here as they could wish. Rabbit thee, Will, but the luggage will break thy back. Have a care, lad. Let me feel: it's as light as a church poor's-box. The de'il's flown awa' with aw the shiners, I think; for it's lang sin' I heard a good ow'd-fashioned jink in a traveller's pack."

This was said more by way of comment than conversation, as he handled the stranger's valise.

The features of these men exhibited a strange mixture of ferocity and mirth. Savage, and almost brutal in their expression, still an atmosphere of fun hovered about them, — a Will-o'-the-wisp sort of playfulness, unnatural and decoying, like the capricious gambols of that renowned and mischievous sprite.

The Quaker seated himself on a low bench before the fire. He took from his neck a huge handkerchief, spreading it out on his knees. He then drew off a pair of long worsted stocking-boots; leisurely untied his shoes, and, extending his ample surface, in the most convenient manner, to the blaze, appeared, with eyes half shut, pondering deeply some inward abyss of thought, yet not wholly indifferent to the objects around him. His tall and bony figure looked more like some stiff and imitative piece of mechanism, than a living human frame with flexible articulations, so fashioned was every motion of the body to the formal and constrained habits and peculiarities of the mind. Seaton had observed, with no slight uneasiness, the suspicious circumstances in which they were placed; but he was fearful of betraying his mistrust, lest it should accelerate the mischief he anticipated. He looked wistfully at his friend; but there was no outward manifestation that could elucidate the inward bent of his thoughts. The keen expression of his eye was not visible; but his other features wore that imperturbable and stolid aspect, which suited the stiff and unyielding substance of his opinions. Seaton was now reminded of his supper by an enquiry from the female as to their intentions on that momentous subject. A "flesh pye," as she termed it, was drawn from its lair, — a dark hole used as a cupboard, — and set before the guests. The very name sounded suspicious and disgusting. In the present state of his feelings, the most trivial circumstance was sufficient to keep alive the apprehensions that haunted him. He endeavoured to rally himself out of his fears, and had in some measure succeeded, thrusting his knife deep into the forbidding envelope. At that moment a

slight rustling caused him to look aside. The idiot was gazing on him. He shrunk from this unexpected glance; and the knife loosened in his grasp. He thought the creature made a sign with his finger, forbidding him to eat. It might be fancy; but nevertheless he felt determined not to touch the food; and the former, with that natural cunning which, in characters of this description, almost assumes the nature of instinct, again appeared crouching over the blaze, and incapable either of observation or intelligence. This transaction passed unnoticed by the rest of the party; and Seaton, afraid that some horrible and unnatural food had been set before him, secretly motioned to his friend, who, apparently unheeding, helped himself to a portion of the mysterious dish. For a moment it occurred to Seaton that the cunning half-wit, apprehensive lest too great a share of the savoury victuals should fall to their lot, had contrived to forbid this appropriation. After a few mouthfuls, however, he observed that his friend had as little relish for the provision as himself, remarking that a rasher of bacon would be preferred, if the hostess could furnish him with this delicacy. A whisper was the result of his request; but, in the end, a savoury collop was set upon the table. Beer was added, as a matter of course; but neither of them partook of the beverage. Though Seaton, to all appearance, drank a portion, yet his fears got the better of his fatigue; and some apprehension of treachery made him careful to convey away the liquor unobserved. Fox now drew up his gaunt figure in the attitude which indicated a change of position. With great deliberation he rose, and addressed the hostess —

"Canst thee show us to bed?"

Answering in the affirmative, she snatched up a light, and leading the way across a narrow yard, she pointed out a small step-ladder, outside the building. Giving the candle into the hands of the grave personage who followed her, she left them, after bidding "Good night!"

They scrambled up the ladder, entering the room appropriated to their use. It was low, and of scanty dimensions. The walls were bare; and the damp oozed through chinks and crevices, where the wind met with slight interruption, though it clamoured unceasingly for admission. The only furniture in the apartment was a low bedstead, on which a straw mattress reposed in all the accumulated filth of past ages. A coverlid of coarse woollen partly concealed a suit of bed-linen that would have stricken terror amongst a tribe of Esquimaux. Neither party appeared wishful to tempt the mysteries that were yet unseen, or to divest himself of clothing. They flung their luggage on the floor, and sat upon it, each awaiting the first word of intercourse from his companion. After a while, there was a heavy groan from the Quaker; and Seaton, something hastily, intimated his suspicions respecting the occupation and pursuits of the party below.

"I am of the like persuasion with thyself," was the reply. "Verily, the warning was not in vain. This night may not pass ere faith shall have its test. I have had a sore struggle. Our safety will be granted;—but through inward guidance rather than from our own endeavours. Yet must we use the means."

"I see no way of escape," returned Seaton, "provided they be what we have unhappily too good cause to apprehend. Unarmed, and without the means of defence,

how can we cope with men, whose object, doubtless, with the robbery, will be the concealment of their crime?"

"Follow my example. It is thine only chance for deliverance. Question me not; but be silent, and obey. I have said it."

While the speaker relapsed into one of his usual reveries, Seaton cast his eyes enquiringly round the room. Their feeble light was ready to expire. The rude gusts rocked the frail tenement "as if't had agues;" and the walls groaned beneath their pressure. There was a small casement, stuffed with paper and a matchless assortment of party-coloured rags, near the roof, directly over the bed. He ascended softly to examine the nature of this outlet; but, to his further alarm, he found it guarded outside with iron bars. This was a direct confirmation of his surmises. A cold shudder crept over him. He felt almost stiffening with horror, as he looked down upon his thoughtful companion, doomed, he doubted not, as well as himself, to fall a prey to the assassin. He gazed wildly round the apartment, as if with some desperate hope of deliverance. His head grew dizzy; objects seemed to flit past him; and more than once he fancied that footsteps were creeping up the ladder. This acute burst of agony subsiding, he listened to the short and rapid whirl of the wind, eddying by; and never had the sound fallen upon his ear so fearfully. It seemed like the wail of a departing spirit, or like some funeral dirge, moaning heavily and deep through the sudden pauses of the blast. He threw himself on the bed. Fatigue and long abstinence had enervated his frame. Nature, forced almost beyond the limit of endurance, had become passive, and almost incapable of suffering. A deep slumber

83240

stole upon him, yet could he not escape the horrors by which he was surrounded. Daggers reeking in blood, — spectres covered with hideous wounds, — murderers on the rack, — gibbets, and a thousand forms, shapeless and unimaginable, crowded past with inconceivable rapidity. A huge figure approached. In its hand a weapon was uplifted, as if to destroy him. He made a vehement effort to escape; but was holden, without the power of resistance. Just as it was descending, he awoke. For awhile he was unable to recollect, precisely, the nature of his situation. The apartment was quite dark. He groped confusedly about him, but to no purpose. At that instant a ray seemed to glide from the casement. It was a moonbeam, struggling through that almost impervious inlet. By this light he beheld a figure, intently gazing towards the window. At the first glance he did not recognise his companion; but, as he started from the couch, the former approached him, and laying one hand on his shoulder, whispered that he should be still. He obeyed; and remained motionless. The reason for this admonition was soon apparent. He heard a slight pattering, at intervals, on the few brittle fragments which the window yet retained. Seaton at first thought it might be the rain, especially as the wind had considerably abated; but he soon found there must be some other cause, from the rattling of sand, and other coarser materials, upon the floor and bed. He crept close to the window, looking out below, but was unable to find out the reason of this disturbance. Suddenly a volley of pebbles bounded past his face, and the moon shining forth at the same instant, a figure was distinguished anxiously attempting to arouse and excite their attention. To his great astonishment, he

recognised the wayward being whose glance had startled him so disagreeably a few hours before. He recollected the idiot's former signal, and felt convinced that this was a more direct and friendly interference. Seaton carefully pulled away a portion of the stuffing, and was thus enabled to bring his head closer to the bars. This movement was observed; and, with an admonition to silence, the strange creature pointed to the ground, at the same time he appeared as if urging them to escape. Seaton comprehended his meaning; but the iron fastenings were an apparently insurmountable impediment. He laid hold of one of the bars with considerable force; and, to his great joy, it yielded to the pressure. Apparently there was no other individual beneath, or this friendly warning would not have been given. It seemed as if the tenants of the hovel were too secure of their prey to set a watch. He descended cautiously to his companion. A few whispers were sufficient to convey the intelligence. Again he mounted to the window; and, on looking down, found that their providential monitor had disappeared. There was no time to be lost. Seaton again tried the bar, and succeeded in removing it. Another was soon wrenched from its hold, and a few minutes more saw him safely through the aperture, from which he let himself down, with little difficulty, to the ground. His companion immediately followed; and once more outside their lodging, a new difficulty presented itself. Seaton knew of no other path than the one by which they had previously gained the cottage; and this would, in all probability, afford a leading track to their pursuers, who might be expected shortly to be aware of their escape. But he was relieved from this dilemma by his companion making

a signal that he should follow. "Remember thy promise," said he. Seaton was prepared to obey, feeling a renewed confidence in the discretion of his guide. Turning into a pathway near the place where they had alighted, their course was towards a river, which they beheld at no great distance twinkling brightly in the moonbeams. They cautiously yet rapidly, proceeded down a narrow descent, fear hastening their flight, for they expected every moment to hear the footsteps of their pursuers. In a little while they turned out of the road, and, by a circuitous path, which the guide seemed to tread with unhesitating confidence, they came to the river's brink. By the brawling of its current, and the appearance it presented, the water was evidently shallow, and might be crossed without much difficulty. Seaton was preparing to make the attempt, but was prevented by his comrade.

"I have some inward impression that we may not cross here. We shall be pursued; and our adversaries will imagine that we have passed over what is doubtless the ford of this Jordan. I know not why, but we must follow its banks, and for some distance, ere we pass."

Seaton urged the danger and folly of this proceeding, and proposed crossing immediately, but met with a decided and unflinching refusal from his companion. They now kept along the river's brink, but with much difficulty. The rain having swollen the waters, they were often forced to wade up to the knees, through the little creeks and rivulets that intersected their path. They journeyed on for a considerable time in silence, when the elder traveller made a sudden pause.

"It is here," said he. Seaton looked on the river; but the broad and deep wave rolled past with frightful im-

petuosity. The moonbeams glittered on a wide and rapid flood, whose depths were unknown, but to which, nevertheless, it seemed that they were on the point of committing themselves.

"The river is both wide and deep!" said the youth.

"Nevertheless, we must cross," replied his more taciturn companion. Without further parley, the latter plunged boldly into the stream. Urged on by his fears, and preferring death in any shape to the fate that was pursuing them, Seaton followed his example. For some time they struggled hard with the full sweep of the current; and it seemed little short of a miracle when they arrived, almost breathless and exhausted, on the opposite side.

"Praised be His name who hath given strength! Though deep waters have encompassed us, yet His arm is our deliverance."

With a holy and ardent outpouring of soul, did this good man render thanksgivings unto Him whose hand had been so visibly stretched out for their protection. Just as he had made an end of speaking, a distant but distinct howl was borne down upon the wind. They listened eagerly, as the sound evidently grew nearer. It was like the short but stifled cry of a hound in full chase.

"Peril cometh as a whirlwind," said George Fox; but fear not, — a way will be left for our escape!"

"It is that malicious hound!" replied Seaton, shuddering, as he remembered the beast which had gazed so intently on him, and which was evidently trained for the present purpose.

"We must climb up to those tall bushes with all speed," said the companion of his flight, at the same time leading the way with considerable haste and agility.

From this height they saw, at some distance up the river, three men on horseback, preceded by a large hound, who, true to the scent, was following steadily on their footsteps. They approached rapidly to the place where the fugitives had gone over, when the dog made a dead halt, and looked wistfully across.

"Loo, loo!" said the foremost rider, "hie on, lass!"—But the beast would not move.

"Sure, now, Mike," said he, as the others came up, "if they've taken the water at this unlucky hole, they'll need no drownin' by this, any how."

"It's the brute, bad luck to her," replied his comrade. "She's on the wrong scent. Why, they're over the ford by this, and we shall have the bloody thief-catchers here before we can open the door for 'em."

"If the bitch had followed my nose, instead of her own beautiful scent," said the remaining speaker, "we should ha' been over the ford, too, long ago. They'd as soon think of swimming o'er the bay in a cabbage-leaf, as cross at this place. Back, back; and we'll shoulder 'em yet, my darlings. Come along, boys;—one of you take the ford, an' watch the road over the hill. Have a care, now, that the rogues be not skulking round the bog. I'll keep the road hereabout; an' thou, Mike, lay to with the hound, when thou art on the other side. May be they'll not find it just so easy to beat us in the hunting, while we've a leg to lay on after them."

The worthy triumvirate here withdrew. The animal was, with much difficulty, forced from her track; but by the help of a stout cord, she was dragged off, yelping and whining, to the great joy of their intended victims. Seaton could not but recognise the very finger of Pro-

vidence, which had pointed out the means of preservation. No other way was left, apparently, for their escape. Whatsoever course they had taken, save this, must have inevitably thrown them into the very toils of their pursuers; and he determined to follow, fearlessly and without question, the future impulses of his companion.

"Shall we attempt to flee, or must we tarry here a space?" he hesitatingly enquired.

"Nay, friend," said his guide, "I wis not yet what we shall do; but, methinks, we are to abide here until morning!"

Seaton shivered at this intimation. His clothes were drenched, and his whole frame stiffened and benumbed with cold. His position, too, crouching amongst decayed branches and alder twigs, was none of the most eligible or easy to sustain. He felt fully resolved, however, to follow the leadings of his friend, being convinced that his ultimate safety depended on a strict adherence to this determination.

The country was very thinly inhabited, and their enemies were in possession of the only outlets by which they could escape to the nearest village. Aided, too, by the sagacity of the dog, their track would inevitably be discovered before daylight enabled them to find shelter. These considerations were too important to be overlooked, and Seaton quietly resolved to make himself as comfortable as circumstances would permit. He wrung out the wet from his clothes, chafed his limbs, and ere long, to his inexpressible relief, the first symptoms of the dawn were visible in the east. Just as a glowing rim of light was gliding above the horizon, they ventured to peep forth, cautiously, from their retreat. To their great mor-

tification, they saw, at a considerable distance, a horseman stationed on the brow of a neighbouring hill, evidently for the purpose of a more extended scrutiny. Signals would inevitably betray their route, should they emerge from their concealment; and escape now seemed as hopeless as ever.

In this fresh difficulty, Seaton again sought counsel from his friend, who replied with great earnestness —

"There is yet another and a more grievous trial;"—he lifted up his eyes, darkening already with the energy of his spirit; — "but, I trust, our deliverance draweth nigh. We must return!"

"Return!" cried Seaton, his lips quivering with amazement. "Whither? Not to the den we have just left?"

"Even so," said the other, with great composure.

"Then all hope is lost!" mournfully returned the enquirer.

"Nay," replied his companion, "but let me ask what chance, even according to thine own natural and unaided sense, there is of deliverance in our present condition? Hemmed in on every hand, without a guide, and strangers to the path we should take, if the watchman from the hill miss our track, there is the hound upon our scent!"

There was no gainsaying these suggestions; but still a proposal that they should return to the cabin, whence they had with such pains and difficulty made their escape, in itself was so absurd and inexplicable a piece of manœuvring, that common sense and common prudence alike forbade the attempt. Yet, on the other hand, common sense and common prudence appeared to be equally unavailing, as to any mode of escape from the toils in which they were entangled.

Again he determined to follow his friend's guidance; who, addressing himself immediately to the task, made the best of his way to the ford, which he had refused to cross the preceding night. They now took the direct road to the house. The morning was sharp and clear. Seaton felt the cold and raw atmosphere cling to his frame, already chilled to an alarming degree; but the excitation he had undergone prevented further mischief than the temporary inconvenience he then suffered. As they came nearer the hut, his very faculties seemed to escape from his control. A sense of danger, imminent and almost insupportable, came upon him. Bewildered, and actuated with that unaccountable but instinctive desperation, which urges on to some inevitable doom, he rushed wildly into the dwelling. It was not as they had left it. Several horses were quietly standing by the door; and a party, who had merely called for the purpose of half an hour's rest and refreshment, were then making preparations to depart. Seaton took one of them aside, and disclosed the terrible circumstances we have related. By a judicious, but prompt application of their forces, they prevented any one from leaving the house, and were prepared to seize all who should return thither. A close search soon betrayed the quality and calling of its inmates. A vast hoard of plunder was discovered, and proofs too abundant were found, that deeds had been there perpetrated of which we forbear the recital. The old woman was seized; and her capture was followed by the apprehension of the whole gang, who, shortly after, met with the retribution merited by their crimes.

The maniac proved to be a son of the old beldame. At times, the cloud unhappily clearing from his mental vision,

had left him for a short space fearfully cognisant of the transactions he was then doomed to witness. On that night to which our history refers, a sudden providential gleam of intelligence flashed upon him, and an unknown impulse prompted his interference in behalf of the unfortunate, and, as he thought, unsuspecting victims. Ere leaving the country, they saw him comfortably provided for; and, as far as the nature of his malady would permit, his mind was soothed, and his darkest moments partly relieved from the horrors which humanity alone could mitigate, but not prevent.

THE

DEMON OF THE WELL.

THE DEMON OF THE WELL.

PEGGY'S WELL, the subject of our engraving, is near the brink of the Ribble, in a field below Waddow Hall. Brunckerley stepping-stones not being far distant, where several lives have been lost in attempting to cross, at times when the river was swollen by a rapid rise, which even a day's rain will produce. These calamities, along with any other fatal accidents which happen in the neighbourhood, are usually attributed to the malevolence of Peggy. The stepping-stones are alluded to in our first volume, as the place where King Henry VI. was taken, after escaping from Waddington Hall.

Some stones are still visible at low water; but whether these are the original "Hippins," or the foundations of a wooden bridge which succeeded them, and was borne down by the ice at the breaking up of the frost in the year 1814, is not known.

The stone image by the well, depicted in our engraving, has been the subject of many strange tales and apprehensions, being placed there when turned out of the house at Waddow, to allay the terrors of the domestics, who durst not continue under the same roof with this misshapen figure. It was then broken, either from accident or design, and the head, some time ago, we have understood, was in one of the attic chambers at Waddow Hall.

Drawn by G. Fleming.

Engraved by Edwd Finden.

PEG O'NELLY'S WELL, NEAR CLITHEROE.

London, Published by Longman, & Co. 1831

THE DEMON OF THE WELL.

——— "Avaunt, thou senseless thing!
Can graven image mimic life, and glare
Its stony eyeballs; grin, make mouths at me?
Go to, it is possess'd;—some demon lurks
Within its substance."

One loud, roaring, and tempestuous night,—the last relics of the year 1660,—some half-dozen boon companions were comforting themselves beside a blazing fire, and a wassail cup, at the ingle of a well-ordered and well-accustomed tavern, within the good borough of Clitheroe, bearing on its gable front, over a grim and narrow porch, a marvellous portraicture, apparently of some four-footed animal, by common usage and consent denominated "The Bull." What recked they of the turmoil that was abroad, while good liquor lasted, and the troll and merry tale went round? The yule-log was blazing on the hearth, and their cups were bright and plenished.

"'Ods bodikins, Nic,—and that's a parson's oath," said a small waspish figure from the farther chimney corner, in a sort of husky wheezing voice, "I'll lay thee a thimble-full of pins thou dar'na' do it."

"And I'll lay thee a grey lapstone, an' a tachin-end to boot, that I run ower t'hippin-stones to-night, and never a wet sole; but a buss and a wet lip I'll bring fro' the bonniest maiden at Waddow!"

"Like enough—like enough, though thou hast to brag for't," said the first speaker tauntingly,—an old customer of the house, and a compiler of leathern extremities for the good burghers and their wives.

"Give o'er your gostering," said another;—"*Non omnes qui citharam tenent, sunt citharœdi.* Many talk of Robin Hood who never shot from his bow. Know ye not 'tis Peggy's year, and her oblation hath not been rendered? Eschew therefore the rather your bravery until this night be overpast."

This learned harangue betrayed the schoolmaster, who was prone to make Gaffer Wiswall's chimney side a temporary refuge from the broils and disturbances of his own, where his spouse, by way of enticing him to remain, generally contrived either to rate him soundly, or to sulk during their brief communion.

"Who cares for Peg?" said the hero who had boasted of his blandishments with the maids. "She may go drown herself i' the Red Sea for aught I care!"

This heretical, unbelieving, and impious scorner, was a man of shreds and patches, a pot-valiant tailor, whose ungartered hosen, loose knee-strings, and thin shambling legs, sufficiently betokened the sedentary nature of his avocations. "I wonder the parson hasn't gi'en her a lift wi' Pharaoh and his host ere this," continued he.

"Or the schoolmaster," said that provoking little personage, the first speaker, whose sole aim was to throw the apple of discord amongst his fellows.

"And pray who may this lady be, whom ye so ungallantly devote to perdition?" enquired a stranger from behind, who had hitherto been silent, apparently not wishful to join the hilarity of those he addressed. The party quesited was in the midst of a puff or exhalation, more than usually prolonged, when the question was put, so that ere he could frame his organs to the requisite reply, the pragmatical tailor, whose glibness of tongue was equalled only by his assurance, gave the following by way of parenthesis.

"Plague on't, where's t'ou bin a' thy life, 'at doesn't know Peg O'Nelly, man?"

"Deuce tak' thee for a saucy lout," said the sutor; "I'll brak thy spindle shanks wi' my pipe-stump. Be civil if thou can, Nicky, to thy betters. — Sir, if it please ye to listen, we'll have you well intructed in the matter by the schoolmaster here." He cast a roguish look at the pedagogue as he spoke. "But I pray you draw in with us, an' make one wi' the rest."

The scholar adjusted himself, passed one hand thoughtfully upon his brow, and with a gentle inclination commenced with a loud hem, or clearance of aught that might obstruct the free communication of his thoughts.

"Peg, or Peggy, as some do more euphoniously denominate her, was maid, woman, or servant, — *ancilla, famula, ministra*, not *pedissequa*, or one who attends her mistress abroad, but rather a servant of all work, in the house yonder at Waddow, many years past. Indeed, my grandmother did use to speak of it as *ex vetere famâ*, — traditionary, or appertaining unto the like."

"I tell thee what, gossip, if thee doesn't get on faster wi' thy tale, Peggy's ghost will have a chronicler of an-

other make. I can see Nic's tongue is yammering to take up a stitch i' thy narrative," interrupted the leathern artificer.

"And I'd bring it up in another guess way," said Nicholas tartly, "than wi' scraps and scrapings fro' gallipots, and remnants o' mass books."

"Pray ye, friends, be at peace awhile, or I may be dealt with never a word to my question," said the stranger beseechingly.

"Go on," rejoined the peremptory occupant of the chimney corner; "but let thy discourse be more akin to thy text."

The schoolmaster, thus admonished, again set forward.

"As I was a saying precedent or prior to this unseasonable interruption, — *medium sermonem*, — I crave your mercy, but I was born, as I may say, with the Latin, or the *lingua latialis* in my mouth, rather than my mother-tongue; so, as I was a saying, this same Peggy, *filia* or daughter to Ellen, if I mistake not, seeing that Peg O'Nell doth betoken, after the manner and use of these rude provincials, that the genitrix or *mater* is the genitive or generator, being ——"

"Now a murrain light on all fools, coxcombs, and ——"

"Tailors' shins — hang thee, for thou hast verily split mine wi' thy gilly-pegs. They're as sharp as a pair of hatchets," said an unfortunate neighbour, who had the ill luck to encounter the gyrations of these offensive and weapon-like appendages to the trunk of Nicholas Slater, who, in his great ardour and distress at the floundering and abortive attempts of the scholar, threw them about in all directions, to the constant jeopardy and annoyance of those more immediately within their sphere of operation.

"Keep 'em out o't gait then," said the testy aggressor, angry at the interruption, being fearful of losing so lucky an opportunity.

"Peg O'Nelly, Sir, was a maid-servant once at Waddow, kill'd first, and then drown'd i' the well by one o' the men for concubinage, as the parson says; and so for the wrong done, her ghost ne'er having been laid, you see she claims, every seventh year, an offering which must be summat wick, and — and——" while he hesitated, another took up the thread of his narrative.

"This is the last night o' the year you see," said the other in continuation; "and we be just thinking to bid good b'ye to th' old chap, and greet th' new one with a wag of his paw, and a drink to his weel-doing. But the first cause o' this disturbance was by reason of its being Peggy's year, and as she hasn't had her sop yet, we thought as how it would be no bad job to get rid o' this drunken tailor here, and he might save some better man; so we have been daring him to cross t' hippin-stones to-night; for there is but an hour or two to spare before her time's up."

"It is not too late," said the stranger, with great solemnity. Every eye was bent upon him. He still sat in the broad shadow projected by one huge chimney-corner, his face overhung by a broad felt hat, girt with a band and buckle; a drooping draggled feather fell over its crown. His whole person was so curiously enveloped in a loose travelling cloak, that nothing but a dark, unshapely mass, having some resemblance to the human form, could be distinguished. Concealment was evidently the object. Every one was awed down into silence. The few words he had spoken seemed to have dried up, or rather frozen at its surface, the babbling current of

their opinions, that ran, whilom, with unceasing folly and rapidity.

"Silence!" cried the sutor from the opposite ingle-side.

This command operated like a charm. The ice was broken, and the current became free. Without more ado, as if in opposition to the self-constituted authority from the high-backed chair, the guests, with one exception only, commenced with a vigorous discharge of "airy missiles," which, by degrees, subsided into a sort of desultory sharp-shooting; but their words were neither few nor well applied. It was evident that a gloom and disquietude was upon the assembly. There was a distinct impression of fear, though a vague notion as to its cause;—a sort of extempore superstition—a power which hath most hold on the mind in proportion as its limits and operations are least known or understood. The bug-bear, owing its magnitude and importance to obscurity and misapprehension, becomes divested of its terrors when it can be surveyed and appreciated.

"*Te misereat, miserescat, vel commiserescat mei,*"

quoted the school-master, who, before he could find an equivalent in his mother tongue, was tripped up by the nimble constructor of raiment.

"The dule and his dam are verily let loose on us," said he.

"Our Lady and her grace forefend!" cried he of the awl and lapstone, whose pipe, having unaccountably been extinguished, was just in the act of being thrust down into the red and roaring billets, when he beheld a blue flame hovering on them; a spiral wreath of light shot

upwards, and the log was reduced to a mass of glowing ashes and half-burnt embers. At this critical moment the stranger deliberately approached the hearth. He threw a whole flagon of liquor wilfully upon the waning faggots, and, in a moment, fiz, splutter, and smoke, proclaimed that the warfare of the elements, like many others, had ended in the destruction of both the contending belligerents. The Yule log was extinguished. There was a general rush, and a consternation of so unequivocal a nature, that tables, benches, platters, and drinking utensils, were included in one vast overthrow. Some thought they saw the glowing emblem of Yule transferred to the stranger's eyes, which twinkled like twin loop-holes to the furnace within.

"I have thee now!" said he; but who this unfortunate might be, whom they had so left, even in the very claws of the Evil One, they knew not, nor did they care to enquire. Each, too happy to escape, rushed forth, hatless and sore dismayed, into the street, with all the horrors of a pelting and pitiless night upon his head, and thought himself well off by the exchange, and too much overjoyed that his own person was not the victim in the catastrophe.

In the morning, Isabel, the landlord's ward, and his coal-black steed, were a missing!

Now, it was but a mile or so from this ancient borough to Brunckerley, or Bromiley hippin (stepping) stones, across the Ribble, where, upon this insecure, but long-used mode of transit, the steps of our forefathers were guided over the ford. These same stepping-stones were quite as often the instruments or executioners of Peggy's vengeance, as the well itself dignified by her name. It

need not, therefore, be a matter of surprise, that when the appalling and fearful events of the preceding night were bruited forth in the public thoroughfares upon new-year's morning, — a season when news-carriers and gossips, old and young, are more particularly prone to a vigilant exercise of their talents and avocations, — we say it need not be a source of either suspicion or surprise that many of these conduit-pipes of intelligence, even before the day was broad awake, did pour forth an overwhelming flood of alarm and exaggeration. According to these veracious lovers of the marvellous, shrieks were heard about the requisite time, and in the precise direction where it must needs follow that Isabel was just in the act of being whisked off by one of Peg's emissaries, and that, ere now, she was doubtless offered as one of the septennial sacrifices to her revenge.

It was a brave and comely morning, and a brave sight it was to see old and young go forth to the river on that blessed day. The crisp and icy brink of the brawling Ribble was beset by groups of idle folk, some anxiously looking out for symptoms or traces of the body, others occupied with rakes and various implements for searching the unknown regions beneath the turbid and angry waters. Beyond were the antlered and hoary woods of Waddow, every bough laden with the snows of yester-even, sparkling silently in the broad and level sweep of light, pouring in one uninterrupted flood over the wide and chilly waste, — a wilderness of snow, a gay and gorgeous mantle glittering on the bosom of death and desolation.

Gaffer Wiswall was there. The old man, almost beside himself with grief, heart-stricken with the blow, felt

alone, a scathed trunk, doomed to survive when the green verdure of his existence had departed.

Wet and weary were the searchers, and their toil unremitting, but the body was not found. The "Well," Peg O'Nelly's Well, was tried, with the like result. Surely this was a visitation of more than ordinary spite and malignity. Hitherto the bodies of the victims, with but few exceptions, had been rendered back to their disconsolate survivors, the revengeful ghost apparently satisfied with their extinction; but it was now high time to make the attempt, if possible, to rid themselves of her persecutions.

"Look here!" said one of the by-standers, pointing to the river's margin; "there hath gone a horse, or, it may be, two, along these slippery banks, but a few hours ago, and the track seems to come from the river."

"Let us see to the other side," said another, "if there be a fellow to it." And, sure enough, on the opposite bank, there were footmarks corresponding thereto, as though one or more adventurous horsemen had swam the swollen waters recently, a little higher up than the ford, pursuing their slippery way by the very margin, along the woods, for some distance, when their track was lost amid these deep and almost pathless recesses.

"Mercy o' me," said one, "it is deep enough thereabouts to drown the castle and hill to boot. Neither horse nor man could wade that hurly-burly there last night, for the waters were out, and the footboy from Waddow told me that nobody could even cross the hippin-stones at eight o'clock. He came round by the bridge."

"But if the beasts could swim?" said another, of more knowledge and shrewdness than the rest.

"Swim!—Go to!" said the small leathern-aproned per-

sonage, whose functions we have before adverted to, at the bright and merry ingle of old Wiswall; "neither man nor beast could have held breast against the torrent."

This was a complete negation to the whole. Nevertheless something had crossed, whether cloven-footed or not they were unable to distinguish, inasmuch as the demon, or whatsoever it might be, had taken the precaution to make its passage in a pair of horse-shoes. The probability was, that Peggy had varied the usual mode of her proceedings, and sent a messenger with a strong arm and a fiery steed to seize her victim.

"We're none on us safe," cried one, "fro' this she div—div—. Save us! I'd like to ha' made a bad job on't."

"The bloody vixen is ne'er satisfied," said an old gossip, whose nose and chin had been gradually getting into closer fellowship for at least a long score of winters. "I'll hie me to Bet at th' Alleys for a charm that 'll drive aw t' hobgoblins to the de'il again. When I waur a wee lassie, the scummerin dixies didn't use to go rampaging about this gate. There was nowt to do, but off to t' priest, an' th' job waur done. Now-a-days, what wi' new lights, doctrines, an' lollypops, Anabaptists, an' Presbyterians, they're too throng wranglin' wi' one another to tak' care o' the poor sheep, which Satan is worrying and harrying like hey go mad, and not a soul to set th' dog at him, nor a callant to tak' him by t' horns, an' say 'Boh!'"

It seems "the good old times," even in those days, were objects of regret, still clung to with fondness and delight — reversing the distich; for

"Man never is, but always *has been* blest!"

It is a principle in our very nature, that we should look back with yearnings to our youthful years, when all was fresh and joyous; when our thoughts were in all the prime, the spring-tide of their existence, and our emotions, young and jocund as ourselves, bubbled forth fresh and clear as the mountain-spring from its source. The change is not in the objects around us; it is in ourselves. Looking through the medium of our own jaded and enervated feelings, we fancy all things have the same worn-out aspect, and contrast the present with the freshness and vigour of our former existence.

Turn we now to the former inmates at Waddow; an old-fashioned building in that old-fashioned age, now re-edified and rebuilt. It is beautifully situated on a slope on the Yorkshire side of the Ribble, beyond the "hippin-stones" we have named.

In a low, dark chamber, panelled with dingy oak, into which the morning sun burst joyously, its garish brightness ill assorting with the solemnity and even sadness of the scene, there sat an elderly matron, owner and occupier of the place. The casements were so beset with untrimmed branches and decayed tendrils, that her form looked dim and almost impalpable, seen through the mist, the vagrant motes revelling in the sunbeams. It seemed some ghostly, some attenuated shape, that sat, still and stately, in that gloomy chamber. Before her stood a female domestic, antique and venerable as herself, and the conversation was carried on scarcely above a whisper, as though silence brooded over that mansion, rarely disturbed by voice or footstep.

"I heed not these idle tales. A hammer and a willing hand will pound yon bugbear into dirt," said the dame.

"If there be none else, I'll try what the hand of a feeble but resolute woman can do. Yon Dagon — yon graven image of papistrie, which scares ye so, shall be broken for the very beasts to trample on."

"But the dins last night were —"

"Tell me not of such folly. When yonder senseless thing is gone, you shall be quiet, may be, if the rats will let ye. Send Jock hither, and let Jim the mason be sent for, and the great iron mallet. Quick, Mause, at my bidding. We shall see whether or not yonder grim idol will dare to stir after it is cast down."

With a look of surprise, and even horror, at this impious intent, did the ancient housekeeper move slowly forth, to execute her commands.

The innocent cause of all this broil was a certain stone figure, rudely sculptured, which, time out of mind, had been the disturbing, but undisturbed inmate of an obscure corner in the cellar beneath an uninhabited wing of the mansion at Waddow. Superstition had invested this rude misshapen relic with peculiar terrors; and, the generation having passed to whom its origin was known, from some cause or another it became associated with Peggy's disaster, who, as it was currently believed, either took possession of this ugly image, or else employed it as a kind of spy or bugbear to annoy the inhabitants of the house where she had been so cruelly treated. There did certainly appear some connection between Peggy's freaks and this uncouth specimen of primitive workmanship. Though bearing evident marks of some rude effigy, the spoliation of a religious house, at some reforming, or, in other words, plundering, era — the ideal similitude, probably, of a Romish saint, — yet, whenever Peggy's emis-

saries were abroad, and a victim was to be immolated this disorderly cast-out from the calendar was particularly restless; not that any really authenticate, visible cases were extant of these unidol-like propensities to locomotion, but noises and disturbances were heard for all the world like the uncouth and awkward gambols of such an ugly thing; at least, those who were wiser than their neighbours, and well skilled in iconoclastics, did stoutly aver that they had heard it "clump, clump, clump," precisely like the jumping and capering of such a misshapen, ill-conditioned effigy, when inclined to be particularly merry and jocose. Now this could not be gainsayed, and, consequently, the innocent and mutilated relic, once looked upon as the genius, or tutelary guardian of the house, was unhesitatingly assigned to the evil domination of Peggy. It might be, that the rancour she displayed was partly in consequence of an adequate retribution having failed to overtake her betrayer, and the family, then resident at Waddow, not having dealt out to him the just punishment of his deserts. Thus had she been permitted to pervert the proper influences and benevolent operations of this mystic disturber to her own mischievous propensities; and thenceforth a malignant spirit troubled the house, heretofore guarded by a saint of true Catholic dignity and stolidity.

But it seemed the time was now come when these unholy doings were to be put an end to. The present owner of Waddow, tired, as we have seen, of such ridiculous alarms, and the terrors of her domestics, and wishful to do away with the evil report and scandal sustained thereby, was now resolved to dissipate these idle fears, to show at once their folly and futility.

"Well, Mause, the old lady will have her way, I know; but if she doesn't rue her cantrips, my name's not Jock; that's all." And here the speaker stamped with a heavy clouted foot upon the kitchen hearth, whither the lady's message had been conveyed.

"Thou maun get thy hammer and pick, lad, and soon, too, I tell thee," said Mause.

"I'll do aught 'at she asks me; but, — but — to run, like some goupin' warlock, to the whame o' destruction wi' one's een open, it's what no Christian will do, that hasna' forsworn his baptism."

"Maun I tell her so?" enquired Mause, with a significant emphasis.

"Naw, naw; no' just soa; but thee maun — wait a bit; — let's see." Here he began to beat about, anxiously, for an excuse, which did not present itself with the same facility as the expression of his unwillingness to undertake the job. "Eh me! — Jock Tattersall, — herd and bailiff now these twenty years, — that I should be brought to sich a pass; an' aw' through these plaguy women. Well, well; but if a good stiff lie, Mause, would sarve my turn, I wouldna' care so mich. Hears to me, owd wench; tell mistress I'm gone wi' t' kye to water, Peg's well being frozen up."

"Tell her thysel'," said the indignant Mause; "an' then one lie may sarve. I'll no go to the dule upo' thy shouthers!"

"There's Bob i' the yard yon; winnat he do for her instead?"

"I tell thee what, Jock," said Mause, "mistress 'll ha' 't done in her own way; so we may as weel budge sooner as later. But let's a' go together, an' I warrant our dame

will be first, an' she'll stand i' th' gap, if aught should happen. Besides courage comes wi' company, thee knows, an' there's a round dozen of us."

This proposal, in the present exigency, seemed the best that could be adopted. The whole household, were full of misgivings about the result; yet, sheltered under the authority of their mistress, and themselves not consenting to the deed, they trusted Peggy would consider it in the same light, and if she should break forth upon them, doubtless she would possess sufficient discrimination to know the real aggressor, and wreak her vengeance where it was due.

Mause was despatched to their mistress, who, after a short period, starched and pinned, her aspect as stiff and unyielding as her disposition, consented to take the lead, and shame the unwillingness and cowardice of her domestics. Immediately behind walked, or rather lagged, the executioner with his weapons, looking more like unto one that was going to execution. Mause came next, then the remainder of the household, not one of them disposed to quarrel about precedency. The room to which they were tending was low, dark, and unfurnished, save with the *exuviæ* of other parts of the premises. Rats and lumber were its chief occupants. A few steps accomplished the descent, the chamber having less of the nature of cellarage than that of a dairy, which, in former times, and until a more eligible situation had been found, was the general use and appropriation to which it was allotted. Seldom visited, Peggy, or rather her mysterious representative, reigned here without molestation or control. At times, as we have before seen, the image, awaking from its stony slumber, played the very shame amongst the chattels in the lumber-room.

Its activity and exertions against "social order" were now destined to be for ever ended. Irrevocable was the doom, and the lowering aspect of the proud dame of Waddow, as the door unclosed, and a faint light from the loophole opposite, revealed her enemy in all the mockery of repose, —grim, erect, and undisturbed,—showed the inflexibility of her purpose.

"Now to work," said she; "come hither with thy torch, Hal; why dost loiter so? and where's Jock, and the mason with the tools?" But Jock and his compeer were loth to come, and the lady's voice grew louder and more peremptory. "Shame on ye, to be cow'd thus by a graven image—a popish idol—a bit of chiselled stone. Out upon it, that nature should have put women's hearts into men's bosoms. Nay, 'tis worse than womanhood, for they have the stouter stomach for the enterprise, I trow. Bring hither the hammer, I say. Doth the foul apprehension of a strumpet terrify you, that has been dead and rotten these hundred years?"

Thus did the sturdy dame strive to quell their fears, and stimulate them to the attack. Yet they lingered, and were loth to begin. Nay, one whispered to his fellow that the image grinned, and frowned horribly during this harangue, and made mouths at the trenchant dame.

"It's no use," said Jock; "I darena strike!"

"Thou craven kestril!" said she, angrily; "and what should ail thee to shy at the quarry? Give me the weapon." And with that she seized the hammer, as though rendered furious by the pusillanimity of her attendants. The whole group were paralysed with terror. Not a word was spoken;—scarcely a breath was drawn;—every eye was rivetted upon her, without the power of with-

drawal. They saw her approach, as though endowed with tenfold strength, and lending the whole weight of her long, thin arm to the blow, with a right good will added thereto, she dealt a powerful stroke at the head of this dumb idol. A headless trunk tumbled on the floor; but with that there came a shriek, so wild, woful, and appalling, that the cowardly attendants fled. The torch-bearer threw down the light, and the whole of the domestics, with dismal outcries, rushed pell-mell through the narrow passage; fearful, inconceivable horror, urging their flight. The dame was left alone, but what she saw or heard was never divulged;—an altered woman she looked when she came forth;—like one of the old, still portraits, that had slipped down from its frame in the gloomy oaken chamber. She spoke not again, even to Mause, that day, but seemed as if bent on some deep and solemn exercise. Abstracted from every outward impression, she sat, the image of some ancient sibyl communing with the inward, unseen pageantries of thought,—the hidden workings of a power she could not control. Towards night, she seemed more accessible. Naturally austere and taciturn, she rarely spoke but when it was absolutely necessary; yet now there was a softened, a subdued tone of feeling, and even a bland expression in her address, which for years had not been felt. Some bitter, some heart-searing disappointment, had dried up the sources of feeling, and left her spirit withered, without nurture, and without verdure, without so much as a green spot in the untrodden wilderness of her existence.

"I've seen him, Mause," said she, as though half in earnest, half musing, when the faithful domestic came to warn her mistress that the time of rest was at hand.

"Seen who, my lady?"

"Bless thee, silly wench, I've seen William. Nay, nurse, it was thy boy, as thou didst use to call him; and, as sure as these aged eyes have wept themselves dry at his departure and decease, I saw his vision this morning i' the image-chamber."

"Eh! the good saints guide and preserve us," said the aged menial, crossing herself very devoutly, more by way of conjuration or counter-charm, than from any proper feeling of reverence or faith in the mystic symbol of our redemption. "There's death at the door, then, sure enough," she continued; "aw this gramarye and foretokening isn't for nought; so who's to pay for it?"

"When the light was gone," said the dame, as though scarcely heeding this interpolation of her domestic, "I stayed a brief space; but what passed—" here she raised her dim and hollow eyes for a moment; "no matter now, Mause; suffice it that my nephew, who was drown'd seven long years ago, stood before me!"

"But young master, Heaven rest his soul, what can he want from yonder bright mansion of glory, where you always said he was gone," replied Mause, "that he should come again to this pitiful world? Eh me! that Peggy should ha' claw'd so fair a victim."

"Peace, Mause; never would I believe it. Nor even now will I, for one moment, apprehend that Heaven would put any of its creatures, for whom its care is continually going forth, into the power of a base and vindictive harlot — that the All-merciful and All-good would render up an innocent victim to her malice. Better worship Moloch and the devils, unto whom our forefathers did offer a vain and cruel sacrifice. No, Mause! believe me, our faith forbids. The light of revealed truth shows no such misrule

in the government of the Deity. The powers of evil are as much the instruments of good in his hand, as the very attributes of his own perfections. And yet, strange enough that my devoted William should appear at the very time, and in the very place, when the destruction of the ugly image was accomplished, as though the charm were then broken, and he were set free! I am distressed, bewildered, Mause; the links are too strong to be undone by my feeble and unassisted reason. That he was reckoned, by common report, as a doomed one to that vindictive ghost, I know; and that the mutilation of yonder image should apparently have called forth his very substance from the dark womb where he had lain, transcends my imperfect knowledge. Beshrew me, but I could readily become tinctured with the prevailing belief, did not my firm hold on the goodness and the omnipotence of the great Ruler of all, sustain my faith and forbid my distrust."

"I know not what wiser heads may think; but if I'd seen his wraith rising fro' the image, I should ha' thought —what I do yet—and so——"

"Tarry with me through the night, Mause. This vision haunts me strangely, and I do feel more heavy and debilitate than I have been wont."

Whether the shock was too great or too sudden for a frame so stubborn and unyielding, we know not; but that the firmest often feel more intensely the blows and disasters which others, by yielding to them, do evade, needeth not that we set forth, inasmuch as it is too plain and demonstrative to require illustration. On that same night, Mause, awakening from a short and broken slumber, looked on her mistress, and, lo, she was a corpse!

This event, according to the popular belief, would

doubtless add another to the list of Peggy's victims, and was looked upon as a terrible token from the demon, against all who should hereafter have the temerity, or presumption, to interfere with her proceedings.

The following day it was noised abroad, and the survivors were mindful to have the entrance to this fearful chamber walled up, and thus prevent any further mischief or interference.

Towards eventide, or ere the lights were renewed in the death-chamber, there came a gentle knock at the hall door. An aged domestic answered the summons; but, with a scream, she fled, as from the face of an enemy. A footstep was heard in the hall. Slowly it ascended the stairs. They creaked and groaned, every step seeming to strike with a cold shudder to the heart. They verily thought that the house was beset by a whole squadron of infernals, who had sent a messenger for the body of their mistress. The tramp of the mysterious visiter was heard in the death-chamber. Moans and bewailings were distinctly audible; and Mause, who was in the room, came down with a face colourless and wan, as though she had seen a ghost. She could not articulate, save one harrowing word,—

"William!" She cried, and pointed upwards. Seven years ago had he been drowned, according to general belief, one fearful night, in crossing the river by Bromiley or Brunckerley hippin-stones. Nephew, and heir-presumptive to the lady of Waddow, he had left his home that evening writhing under her malediction; for he had, in an evil hour, as she thought, formed a base-born attachment to an orphan, living with Gaffer Wiswall, and generally looked upon as his daughter. It was this curse which clave, like

a band of iron, about the breast of the proud dame of Waddow; for, in the morning light, when there came news to the hall that he had been seen, swept down by the ravening flood, perishing, without hope of succour, she sat as though stupified, without a murmur or a tear, and her stricken heart knew not this world's gladness again. Solitary and friendless, this fair creation seemed blotted out, and she became fretful and morose. All her earthly hopes were centred in this boy, the offspring of a sister, and they were for ever gone! Mause only had the privilege of addressing her without a special interrogation. The appearance, or it might be, the apparition, of her beloved nephew, seemed again to open the sluices of feeling and affection; to soften and subdue the harshness that incrusted her disposition; but it was only the forerunner of an eternal change, — the herald of that inexorable tyrant, Death!

Darkness was fast gathering about them; but the whole household were huddled together in the kitchen, none daring to venture forth to their occupations. A long hour it seemed, while every moment they were expecting some further visitation. The fire was nigh extinguished, for who durst fetch the billet from the stack? The conversation, if such might be called the brief and scanty form of their communications, was kept up in a sort of tremulous whisper, every one being frightened at the sound of his own voice. How long this state of things might have lasted, we know not, inasmuch as the terrible footsteps were again heard upon the stairs — the same slow and solemn tread. They heard its descent into the hall. It became louder, and the fearful vision was evidently approaching. The sound was now in the narrow

passage, close to them. The next moment, a form was presented to their view, carrying a taper, and recognised, by the major part of the group; it being the very semblance of their deceased "young master," as he was generally called, charged, it was true, but still sufficiently like him, when living, to be distinguished from any other. One loud cry announced their discovery of the phantom.

"Why tarry here?" said the intruder. "Yonder corse hath need of the death-lights;" and with that he disappeared. Yet, however needful it was that the usual offices should be rendered to the departed, there was no one bold enough to perform the duty. Nevertheless the lights were kindled by some invisible hand, in the lady's chamber that night; and, by whomsoever the office was fulfilled, the corpse was not without a watcher, and a faithful one, till daylight came softly on the couch, driving away the darkness, and the apprehensions it excited.

It was past midnight ere the domestics retired to rest, or rather to their chambers;—so fearful were they of another visit, that, by a little care and management, they contrived so that none should be left alone, till morning arose before them, bright and cheerful, dissipating, in some measure, their former terrors.

Softly and cheerily broke that morning sun upon the frosty and embossed panes of Gaffer Wiswall's dwelling; but the light brought no cheer, no solace unto him. The old man was now a withered, a sapless trunk, stripped of the green verdure which had lately bloomed on its hoary summit. His daughter, as he loved to call her,—and he had almost cheated himself into the belief,—was ravished from him, and the staff of his declining years had perished.

He was sitting moody and disconsolate, and, like the bereaved mother in Israel, "refusing to be comforted," when a stranger entered, and, without speaking, seated himself by the broad ingle, opposite the goodman, who was looking listlessly forth into the blazing faggots, but without either aim or discernment. The intruder was wrapped in a dark military cloak; his hat drawn warily over his forehead, concealing his features beneath the broad and almost impervious shadow.

Wiswall awoke from his study, and, with a curious eye, seemed silently to ask the will and business of the stranger; but he spoke not. The old man, surveying his guest more minutely, enquired, —

"Be ye far ridden, this morning, sir cavalier?"

"Not farther than one might stride ere breakfast," was the reply, but in a low, and, it seemed, a hasty tone, as though impatient of being questioned, and preferring to remain unnoticed.

The tapster's instincts were still in operation. With the true spirit of his calling, he enquired, —

"From the army, sir?"

"Ay, from the grand Turk, an' thou wilt."

"The king, they say, hath a fairer word for the dames than for those stout hearts who won him his crown," said the victualler, seemingly conversant in the common rumours that were abroad. "The sparks about court," continued he, "do ruffle it bravely among the buxom dames and their beauteous ——" Here his daughter's bright image came suddenly upon his recollection, and the old man wept.

"Why dost weep, old man?" enquired his guest.

"Alas! I had a daughter, once, a match fit for the

bravest galliard that sun e'er shone upon. She was the wonder and dismay of all that looked on her. She loved a soldier dearly, and her mouth would purse and play, and her eye would glisten at a cap and plume; and yet the veriest prude in all Christendom was not more discreet."

"Mayhap her sweetheart was a soldier, and abroad at the wars; so that these were but the outgoings of hope and expectation for his return."

"Her sweetheart, marry! She had once — but — he was ta'en from us. The young heir of Waddow, as we always called him, at the hall yonder, was her true love; but one night, seven long bitter years back, the flood swept him away; we never saw him again, but Isabel's hope was for ever blighted!"

"And the body — was it not found?"

"Nay, for the current was swift, and bore him hence. The demon — she hath ta'en mine, as the next dainty morsel for her ravening appetite."

"'Tis seven years since I first sought my fortune as a soldier. I served my king faithfully. With him I went into exile. He hath returned, and here I come to redeem my pledge."

The stranger threw off his cloak, and the astonished, and almost incredulous tapster, beheld the nephew of the dame, now heir to the inheritance of Waddow.

"Though swept rapidly down the stream on that dreadful night when I fled, heedlessly fled, from the denunciations of her who had supplied a parent's place from my infancy, I escaped, almost by a miracle, at a considerable distance below the ford, where I attempted to cross; yet, knowing her inflexible disposition, for she had

threatened to leave me pennyless, I resolved to seek my fortune as a soldier, until I should be enabled to wed with better prospects for the future. I contrived to assure Isabel of my safety, but I strictly enjoined secresy. I was not without hope that, one day or another, appearing as though I had risen from the dead, I should win a reluctant consent, it might be, to our union. A long exile was the only recompense for my loyalty. The restoration hath rendered me back, and I have redeemed my pledge. At my urgent entreaty the other night, the first of my return, she accompanied me, and we have plighted our vows at the same altar. I took her privily to my former home. Knowing a secret entrance to the chamber where the image is deposited, I concealed her there, safe, as I thought, from molestation, until I had won the consent of her who was my only friend. To my horror and surprise, she discovered me there, and the screams of Isabel had nigh betrayed her presence; but it was evident she thought the grave had given back its dead. I could not then undeceive her, and when I returned she was a corpse! Dying without will, I am now the lawful heir to yon good inheritance, and Isabel is the proud mistress of Waddow!"

This unlooked-for intelligence was almost overwhelming; the old man's frame seemed hardly able to bear the disclosure. He wept like a child; but the overflow of his joy relieved the oppressed heart, full even to bursting.

Yet Peggy was not without a sacrifice, according to popular belief, which sacrifice was offered in the person of the late defunct at Waddow. Indeed, according to some, it were an act of unbelief and impiety to suppose

any other, and only to be equalled by that of the attack made by this resolute dame upon Peggy's representative; an outrage she so dearly atoned for by her own death.

The headless trunk was, however, removed some years afterwards to its present site, by the brink of "the Well," where, having fallen upon evil and unbelieving times, it is desecrated to the profane uses of a resting-place for cans unto the merry maidens, who come thither, at morning and eventide, to draw water.

Many are the victims now recorded to the capricious malevolence of Peggy; and, though deprived of her domicile at Waddow, still her visitations are not the less frequent; and whether a stray kitten, or an unfortunate chick, be the sufferer, the same is deemed a victim and a sacrifice to the wrath of Peggy's *manes*.

THE SANDS.

Drawn by A.Fisherby

Engraved by Edwd Finden

ULVERSTONE SANDS.

London. Published by Longman &C.º 1832.

THE SANDS.

The following account of an excursion over the Sands, from Mr. Baines's "Companion to the Lakes," will give a very accurate idea of the mode in which travellers accomplish this interesting, though sometimes perilous journey, over the bare sands of the Bay of Morecambe. Taking a horse at Lancaster, and setting out at the same time with the "Over-sands" coach, he says, —

"We arrived at Hest Bank, on the shores of Morecambe Bay, three miles and a half from Lancaster, about five in the afternoon. Here a little caravan was collected, waiting the proper time to cross the trackless sands left bare by the receding tide. I soon saw two persons set out in a gig, and, following them, I found that one of them was the guide appointed to conduct travellers, and the other a servant, who was driving his master's gig to the Cartmel shore, and was to return with the horse the same evening. He had, of course, no time to lose, and had begun his journey at the earliest possible hour. We found the sands firm and level, except the slight wrinkles produced by the ripple of the waves; but they were still wet, having only just been left by the sea. The guide

appeared to drive with caution, and in no place went further than a mile from land. We had a good deal of conversation, and I found him intelligent and communicative. His name is Thomas Wilkinson. He is a tall, athletic man, past the middle age, and bears marks of the rough weather he has been exposed to in discharging the duties of his post during the winter months. In stormy, and more especially in foggy weather, those duties must be arduous and anxious. It is his business to station himself at the place where the river Keer runs over the sands to the sea, which is about three miles from Hest Bank, and to show travellers where they may pass with safety. The bed of the river is liable to frequent changes, and a fresh of water after rain may, in a very short time, convert a fordable place into a quicksand. When we came to the river, he got out of the gig, and waded over to ascertain the firmness of the bottom, the water being about knee-deep. Having escorted us a little further, till we saw the guide for the Kent at a distance, and having pointed out the line we should keep, he left us to return to his proper post. We gave him, as is usual, a few pence; for, though he is appointed by government, his salary is only 10*l.* a-year, and he is, of course, chiefly dependent on what he receives from travellers."

"These sands are called the Lancaster Sands, and the guide said that they were at present eleven miles over, from Hest Bank to Kent's Bank, but that he had known them when he could pass directly over in not more than seven miles. The tide forms a channel in the sand, which has been gradually coming nearer the shore for some years past, and has obliged persons crossing to take a longer circuit. It was now the spring tide, and the

sands we were travelling upon would, at high-water, be seventeen feet below the surface of the sea.

" The day was exceedingly fine, and the prospects, in crossing over the sands, were splendid. The whole coast of the bay, from Peel Castle round to the shore beyond Lancaster; — the stern crags of Warton and Arnside Fells, on the right; — further eastward, the well-known form of Ingleborough, whose broad head, not apparently of very great elevation, is still visible from every considerable hill in Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland, and seems to lift itself in serene and unchanging majesty over the neighbouring hills; — the broken and picturesque shores of the Kent, beautifully wooded, and forming a vista to the eye; — the fells of Cartmel, rising in the mid-distance, their sides hung with forests, and several ornamental parks lying round their base; — and above, and far beyond them, the noble chain of the Westmoreland and Cumberland mountains, whose lofty summits, clothed with light, formed a sublime barrier, stretching along the northern horizon. Such are the principal features of a prospect, which is not the less beautiful because it rises from the level expanse of the sands, and which was to me the more interesting from the novelty of my own situation.

" The Ulverstone coach, several gigs, and some persons on horseback, had followed us at a little distance, keeping the track left by the wheels of the vehicle which conveyed the guide. When Wilkinson left us, we rode on two or three miles before we came to the channel of the Kent, and there we found a guide on horseback, who had just forded the river from the opposite side. The guide stationed here has long gone by the name of the Carter,

and it is difficult to say whether the office has been so called from the family in which it has been vested, or the family have assumed their official title as a cognomen; but it is certain that for many ages the duties of guide over the Lancaster Sands have been performed by a family named Carter, and have descended from father to son. The present possessor of the office is named James Carter, and has lately succeeded his father. He told me that some persons said the office of guide had been in his family five hundred years, but he did not know how any body could tell that; and all he could say was, that they had held it 'for many grandfathers back, longer than any one knew.' The salary was only 10*l.* a-year till his father's time, when it was raised to 20*l.*; yet I should suppose that the office is a rather productive one, as the family have accumulated some property.

"The Carter seems a cheerful and pleasant fellow. He wore a rough great coat, and a pair of jack-boots, and was mounted on a good horse, which appeared to have been up to the ribs in the water. When we came to him, he recommended us to wait till the arrival of the coach, which was nearly a mile distant, as the tide would then be gone further out. I asked if there had been any accidents in this place lately; to which he replied, that some boys were drowned two years ago, having attempted to pass when the tide was up, in defiance of warnings; but that, with that exception, there had not been any accidents for a considerable time. When the coach came up, we took the water in procession, and crossed two channels, in one of which the water was up to the horses' bellies. The coach passed over without the least difficulty, being drawn by fine tall horses. Arrived at the

other side, the man of high genealogy received our gratuities, and we rode on, keeping close to a line of rods which have been planted in the sand to indicate the track, and which have remained there for many months. We shortly met the coach from Ulverstone, and several other vehicles, and, as we proceeded, the views of the estuary and the distant mountains became still more beautiful and interesting. Three or four miles brought us to Kent's Bank on the Cartmel shore. I infer that the river is not fordable for any long period, as the guide told the servant whom I have mentioned that he must return in an hour if he wished to pass over again that evening.

"The peninsula formed by the Kent and the Leven is three miles over; and, after passing it, I came to the latter river, the sands of which are of the same breadth, and must be crossed to reach Ulverstone."

These sands are reckoned more dangerous than the former, as the channel of the river is frequently shifted.

It is safest to cross at spring-tides; the water then is more completely drained out, and the force of the tide sweeps the bottom clean from mud and sediment.

Here another guide on horse-back escorts travellers over.

The views up the Leven are fully as picturesque, though not quite so extensive, as those at the mouth of the Kent. A bold, woody promontory, seen in our engraving, projects into the river at the mouth of the ford, narrowing it to less than half the breadth. The two ridges of the Cartmel and Ulverstone Fells, the former clothed with wood, and the latter with verdure, run up inland, and carry the eye back to the mountains,

round the head of Coniston Water and Windermere. On the Ulverstone shore, to the left of the town, are the grounds of Conishead Priory, which adorn, with their rich woods and lawns, the gently waving side of the hill: and the mouth of the Leven opens out to the Bay of Morecambe, the shores of which are visible to a great extent.

THE SANDS.

" It is the shout of the coming foe,
Ride, ride for thy life, Sir John;
But still the waters deeper grew,
The wild sea-foam rushed on."

Old Ballad.

THE sands forming the bay of Morecambe, covered by the sea at high-water, are crossed every day by travellers, whose time or inclination leads them to choose this route, rather than one more circuitous, and nearly thrice the distance, inland. Yet the sands are by no means without danger, especially to the incautious or unwary. Scarcely a year passes without some loss of lives, generally owing to the obstinacy or fool-hardiness of the victims. Guides are appointed to conduct strangers across this trackless waste, whose duty it is to examine daily, on the receding of the tide, the several routes by which passengers may accomplish their journey. The places where danger is to be apprehended, are the fordings of the several rivers or watercourses, which, even when the sands are bare, still

pour forth a considerable stream to the ocean. These fords are continually changing, by reason of the shifting of the sands, so that one day's path may, on the morrow, prove a dangerous and impassable quicksand.

The principal guide has a small annuity from government, and is obliged, in all weathers, to perform this disagreeable, but highly important duty. The priory of Conishead was charged with this office over the Leven or Ulverstone sands, and the guide whom they appointed, besides perquisites, had an allotment of three acres of land, with fifteen marks per annum. Henry the Eighth, on the dissolution of the monasteries, charged himself and his successors with the payment of a certain sum to the person that should be guide for the time being, by patent under the seal of the duchy of Lancaster. Such was the importance, and the idea of danger attached to this journey, that, on a little rocky island, midway between the shores of Cartmel and Furness, there stood a small chapel or oratory, built by the monks of Furness, where prayers were daily offered for the safety of travellers, then occupied in this perilous attempt. Yet these, called the Ulverstone sands, are scarcely more than three miles across, whilst the well-known Lancaster sands, are nine miles, from the circuitous line of the track, though it is said that the shorter passage is the more dangerous. That the longer journey is not unattended with risk, may be inferred from the accidents which have occurred, as well as from the fact, that carriages are sometimes left to the mercy of the coming tide, the passengers making their escape in the best manner they are able.

Our tale hath reference to one of these perilous adventures, — long years ago; — and, as neither plot nor story

is evolved, the reader is warned, if he so please, that he leave the few following pages unread, unless he be of a temper not liable to suffer disappointment thereby.

The night was beautifully calm, — the moon, just sinking upon the verge of the distant waters, where the Bay of Morecambe, the great estuary so called, according to some authorities, by Ptolemy, opens out into the broad channel of the Irish Sea.

The stars shone down, keen, bright, and piercing, — "fixed in their everlasting seat," — ever presenting the same aspect, the same order and disposition through all the changes of this changing and mutable world. The scene was peculiarly inviting; — so calm, so placid, the whole wide and visible hemisphere was without a blot. Nature, like a deceitful mistress, looked so hypocritically serene, that her face might never have been darkened with a cloud, or furrowed by a frown. So winning was she withal, that, though the veriest shrew, and all untamed and ungovernable in her habits and conditions, this night she became hushed and gentle as the soothed infant in its repose.

The same night came down to the Kent side, intending to set out on their perilous march over the sands of the bay, divers travellers, well mounted for the occasion. Yet were their steeds much harassed, weltering in mud and foam, by reason that their journey had been both long and hasty, and their business urgent, nor were they yet without apprehension of pursuit. They looked wistfully down towards the west, where the moon hung over the ocean's brim, a red ensanguined crescent, as if about to dip her golden bowl into the raging deep, or mayhap to launch her glittering bark on that perilous tide. For,

in good sooth, the travellers on that same day, having forded the estuaries of the Duddon and the Leven, were barely in time for their passage across the sands of the Kent, their destination being the tower of Arnside, standing on a round rocky peninsula, little more than two miles from their present station. Yet was the way perilous, though they had time sufficient for their purpose. The river Kent, or Ken, which, when the tide hath receded from the bay, followeth often at a considerable depth and speed, was, at this period, much swollen by reason of the late swells and freshes from the hills. Moreover the tide would, ere long, press back the waters towards their source, and but few hours should elapse ere the ocean itself would roll over, and obliterate every trace of their intended path. Yet, though sure and undeviating was the peril before them, another more imminent, and perchance not less remote, awaited them from behind. They were pursued. Hot and hasty was the chase, and their blood alone would slake the vengeance of their adversaries.

Pausing, ere the first plash was heard in the heavy sands beneath the shore, the foremost horsemen of the party thus held discourse. Those that followed were likewise armed, and, to all appearance, were followers or retainers of the chief, who had been with them upon some foray or predatory excursion.

"We are between fire and water, I trow; but what of that, we must e'en cross."

"And how if the fog of yesternight should come again, or we should miss our track?"

"Tush, Harry, with thine evil croak. There will be time enough to discourse with danger when it comes.

Besides, I would know it blindfold, and the night doth bear no token of either distemper or disquiet."

"Thou art passing careless of our jeopardy. It were better, even now, that we follow the track by the coast. My counsel was set at nought, or we had gone forward by Cartmel, and miss'd this perilous pathway of the sea."

"And with it met the enemy at my gate; or, peradventure, having passed on thither before us, we should have found them in quiet possession of our good fortalice yonder. Truly, it were a precious entertainment. We should have lenten fare, I trow, where they be lords o' the feast."

"Our steeds, I think, would have outstripped them, even by way of the forest and the bridges, but —"

"Thou reckonest not for delay by the hill-paths and the morass, let alone the weary miles that we should have to ride. Tut, man, they fancy not of our crossing this little brooklet here, because I misled them ere we departed; and they are now mightily sure of cutting off our retreat, and getting at the tower before us. How the knaves will slink back when they find the gate barred in their teeth. Forward, Sir Harry, and let the Cumberland wolves take the hindmost!"

They dashed down the slope into the heavy mud by the beach, and soon the little band might have been seen moving like dark specks on the sandy waste, even though night had come on, so clear and unsullied was the atmosphere.

The wind, which, through the day, had blown light, but piercing, from the north, seemed all at once to become more bland and genial. A pause was felt; then

a veering to and fro, like the flapping sail, ere the big canvass comes bellying before the wind; — a pause, created by one of those occult, and uncomprehended operations of nature, to be understood only in the secret recesses of her power, where all the germs of being are elaborated, but whither the most daring and exalted of human capacities never penetrated.

It was near the turn of the tide, and the wind, obeying her spell, as though at the call of that mighty wizard, was gradually veering towards the sea, and shortly would ride on with the rolling billows, driving forward, like some proud charioteer, the dark waters of the Atlantic in its progress.

The travellers were pricking on their way, discreetly; — the channel of the river just before them, rippling pleasantly over some quiet star, that seemed to sink deep within its bosom.

To their right was the voice of the restless and mystic ocean, — obeying the fiat of Him who hath fixed its bounds, — at too great a distance now to excite other feelings than those of their own impotence, and the immensity by which they were surrounded. I know of no sound to be compared to it. There is nought in the wide range of our intelligence that can produce the dread, the almost terrific expansion which it seems to create in the mind, save it be the dizzy view over some dark and unfathomable abyss; — an impression that comes over us like the dread, unutterable, anticipations of eternity!

Suddenly a thin white vapour was seen, obscuring the brightness in the west. Then came a cloud-like haze, scudding on the very surface of the stream, wherein the plash of horses' feet announced their entrance. They

rode slowly on, but the channel was deep, and it seemed as though some sleight and witchery was about them, for the mist became so dense, that the clouds seemed to have dropped down to encompass and enfold them. The stream gradually became deeper, until the foremost horse was wading to the belly, labouring and snorting from the chillness and oppression upon his chest.

"'Tis an unlucky and an embarrassing escort that we are favoured with," said the rider. "The wind, too, whiffles about strangely. 'Tis on my face, now, and verily I think the stream will ne'er be cross'd. I trust we are not wading it down towards the sea."

"Troth, but we be though," hastily replied his friend, after looking down, bending as low as possible to observe his horse's feet, where he could just discern the gouts of foam as they ran right before, instead of passing them from left to right.

"Put back—put back, and soon!" he cried in great alarm; for the mist bewildered them strangely. They did put back, but instead of all obeying the same impulse, some of the party, finding themselves on opposite sides of the stream, were plunging and replunging into it, to rejoin their comrades, every one calling out for his neighbour to follow; so that, in the end, the whole party were so confused, that, on being gathered together once more on the sand, they really knew not on which side of the stream they stood, nor which way to move. They seemed like persons discoursing in a dream, and the mist hung about them so closely, that they could not, even by dismounting, see the marks of their own footsteps. They felt that they were standing on a bank of sand, which they knew must inevitably, and ere long, be covered by the raging tide,

even then, perhaps, on its way to overwhelm and devour them. But this was the utmost of their knowledge, for the direction in which to proceed, or the bearing of either shore, was beyond their knowledge or apprehension. They would now have been glad to retrace their steps, but this, alas! they knew not how to accomplish. To remain, would be certain destruction; to go on, might only be hastening to meet it. But move they must, as the only chance of escape: yet opinions were as various as the points of the compass. One was for going to the right, another to the left, another straight forward, so that what with arguing and wrangling, they became more bewildered and uncertain than ever.

"I do verily believe we have not yet crossed the river," said one.

"Not come across!" replied another; "why we've been through and through, to my own certainty, at least thrice."

"Thrice in thy teeth!" said his angry opponent; "and so I'll go forward."

"And I'll go back," was the reply. But the precise idea they had formed of these opposite and important determinations was more than either of them could explain: even though they had been ever so certain upon these points, to proceed in a straight line in any direction was impossible, without some object by which to direct their course. Ever and anon was heard a heavy plunge into the stream, but even this token had ceased to avail them, for its course could not be ascertained. The tide was now arresting its progress, and the water moved to and fro in every direction, according to the various impulses it received. The wind, too, was light and treacherous; its

breath seemed to come and go, without any fixed point by which they could feel either its arrival or departure. In this dilemma, and without any clue to their extrication, harassed and confounded, they were like men bereft of their senses, and almost at their wits' end. Still they clung instinctively about each other, but their conduct had now taken the opposite extreme. Before, all was bustle and activity, every body giving directions, hallooing, shouting, and so forth. Now, they were silent, and almost stationary, stupified, distracted. There is a fascination in danger. I have known those who never could look down a precipice without a horrible impulse to leap over the brink. Like the scared bird, almost within the gripe of its destroyer, yet unable to flee; so had they lost, apparently, all power of escape. It was a silence more awful even than the yellings of despair. Its horrid gripe was on every heart: every bosom withered beneath its touch. The nature of the most courageous appeared to change; trembling and perplexity shook the stoutest frame; yet suddenly, and unexpectedly, was the silence broken, and the spell that bound them dissolved.

"Hark!" said every voice together; "a bell, by the blessed Virgin!" The sound roused them from their stupor. Hope again visited the prison-house of the spirit.

"On, on," said their leader.

"On, on," was re-echoed on every side; but they were still attempting to escape in different directions. Scarcely two of them were agreed as to the place whence the sound proceeded. Yet it came on, at stated intervals, a long, deep, melancholy knell, almost terrific in their present condition. Another council was attended with the same re-

sults — opinions being as varied as ever. Still that warning toll had some connection with their fellow-men, some link, which, however remote, united them to those who were now slumbering in happiness and security. Yet of their true course and bearing they were as ignorant as ever.

"Now, by 'r lady," said one, "there's either witch or wizard at the tail o' this. Have n't I passed this very place to and fro, man and boy, these twenty years, and never went away by a yard's space, right or left. Now —"

"Right well, Humphry Braithwaite, should I know it too, and yet we might be in a wilderness for aught I can distinguish, either land-mark or sea-mark. Hush, I'm sure that bell is from the right."

"Nay, I hear it yonder, to the left, if I'm not witch'd."

"Thee'rt gone daft, man, 'tis —. Well, if the sound binna' from both sides, right and left! I hear it behind me now."

"We must be moving," said the leader. "There's no chance for us here. We can but meet the enemy, at the worst, and there are three chances of escaping for one of drowning, which way soever we take, at a blind venture. Then let us away together; and may the Virgin and St. Bees be our helper!"

But there were some who would rather trust to their own guidance; and what with the indecision of one, the obstinacy of another, and the timidity of a third, he soon found himself with only one companion, besides his good grey steed, when he flung the reins to his control, and spurred forward.

Reckless, almost driven to desperation, he committed his way to the beast's better discretion, as he thought,

goading on the jaded animal incessantly, his fellow-traveller still keeping behind, but at no great distance. They halted after a space; but how long, it is impossible to say. Hours and minutes, in seasons of pain or excitement, are, in the mind's duration, arbitrary and conventional. To measure time by the state of our feelings, would be as futile as an attempt to measure space by the slowness or impetuosity of our movements. Hours dwindle into minutes, and minutes are exaggerated into hours, according to the circumstances under which the mind moves on. We are conscious of existence only by the succession of our feelings. We are conscious of time only by its lapse. Hence we are apt to make the same measure serve for both; and, as our own dispositions predicate, so doth time run fast or slow. True it is, that time cannot measure thought. The mind notes but the current and passage of its own feelings; they only are the measure of existence, and the medium of identity.

"Halt, Lord Monteagle!" cried his companion from behind; "I hear the sea before us. Hush, and use thine own senses, if they be worth the trial."

The other listened; but it was only for one moment; the next saw him wheel round, urging on his flight in the opposite direction, for he knew, or his senses were rendered deceptive through terror, the sound of the coming tide.

"Halt, Lord Monteagle!" again cried the horseman from behind; "for the water is deeper at every plunge. Halt, I say, for the love of —." The sound died on the speaker's lip, for he was overwhelmed and sickening with the dread anticipation of death.

"On one side or the other, then, I care not which," cried the foremost rider.

"To the right, and Heaven grant us a safe deliverance!"

Away went the panting steeds; but the waters increased; yet were they powerful animals, and they swam boldly on, amid the roar and dash of the rising waves. Still it was with difficulty they could breast the torrent. The courageous beasts braced every sinew to the work — instinctively grappling with danger — every effort was directed to their escape. Suddenly a loud shout was heard, and something dark rose up before them. It might be the hull of some vessel that was approaching, — an ark of safety. This thought was the first that crossed them. But they felt a sudden shock, and a vibration, as though their steeds had struck the land.

They saw, or it was a deception produced by agitation or excitement, the dark outline of the beach, and men hurrying to and fro with lighted torches. They galloped on through the waves, and a few moments brought them safely upon the hard, loose pebbles of the shore.

Joyful was the recognition; for those who had come to their succour were the party from whom they had separated, who had luckily gained the shore before them. But what was their surprise, when they found they had been galloping to and fro, almost within a stone's throw of the beach opposite the place of their destination! Yet, such was their state of bewilderment, that it was an even hand but they had put about on the other side, and attempted to return across the channel. In that case no human help could have rescued them from destruction, for the tide already had overtaken them, and it was only their close proximity unto the shore, which enabled the

horses to regain their footing, and bear them safely to land.

It seems that their pursuers were still outdone; for their stronghold was open to receive them; and the enemy, foiled in their expectations, returned with all speed into Cumberland, lest, during their absence, some more dangerous foe from the borders should lay waste their possessions.

THE

RING AND THE CLIFF.

THE RING AND THE CLIFF.

HAVING in vain attempted to ascertain the locality of the following tradition, we suspect that it may have strayed originally from another county, though it has taken root in our own.

The only place that could, by any possibility, answer the description which marks the catastrophe, is the high ridge above Broughton, in Furness; and, even here, it would be difficult to point out any single spot, which would exactly correspond in every particular.

The Lancashire coast, with here and there an exception, is one low bank or ridge of sand, loosely drifted into hillocks of but mean height and appearance; only preserving their consistency, by reason of the creeping roots of the bent, or sea mat-weed (*Arundo arenaria*) *

* Many a fertile acre has been covered with sand, and rendered useless, which might have been preserved by sowing on its confines the seeds of this plant. The Dutch have profited by a knowledge of its efficacy; Queen Elizabeth prohibited the extirpation of it. As soon as it takes root, a sand hill gathers round it; so that wherever it is planted, it gives a peculiar character to the coast. This grass or

which bind the loose sands together, and prevent them from being dispersed over the adjoining grounds. On the opposite coast fancy might often recognise those very cliffs to which our story alludes; perpendicular, bare, and almost inaccessible, with rents and chasms, where little difficulty would be found in pointing out the exact features represented in this tradition.

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reed is manufactured into mats, baskets, &c. A legislative enactment, however, in 1742, was issued for its preservation. The Scottish parliament likewise protected it, together with *Elymus arenarius*, or upright sea lyme grass.

THE RING AND THE CLIFF.

"And still I tried each fickle art,
Importunate and vain;
And while his passion touch'd my heart,
I triumph'd in his pain."

Goldsmith.

On the sea coast, where a wild bare promontory stretches out amidst the waves of the Irish Channel, is a small hamlet or fishing station. Its site is in the cleft of a deep ravine, through which a small stream lazily trickles, amid

sand and sea slime, to the little estuary formed by the sea at its mouth. Between almost perpendicular cliffs, the village lies like a solitary enclosure, where the inhabitants are separate and alone — aloof from the busy world — their horizon confined to a mere segment of vision. The same ever-rolling sea hath swung to and fro for ages, in the same narrow creek; at the sides of which rise a cluster of huts, dignified with the appellation of village; some of these ornamented, about and upon the roofs, with round patches of the yellow stone crop, and house leek, that never failing protection against lightning and tempest, according to indubitable testimony, set forth by Master Nicholas Culpepper, in his Herbal.

The strong marine odour, so well known to all lovers of sea-side enjoyments, may here be sensibly appreciated; for the pent up effluvia from the curing of fish, marine algæ, and other products of the coast, abundantly strengthen the reminiscences connected with this solitary and secluded spot.

It was on a cold, grey morning in October, that two individuals were loitering up a narrow path from the hamlet, which led to the high main road, passing from village to village along the coast; branches from which, at irregular intervals, penetrated the cliffs to the different fishing stations along the beach. The road, on rising from the village, runs along the summit, a considerable height above the sea; terrific bursts through some rocky cleft reveal the wide ocean, rolling on from the dim horizon to the shore. Here and there may be seen the white sail, or the hull of some distant bark, gliding on so smooth and silently as to suggest the idea of volition obeyed without any visible effort. Rising from the ravine, the

road passes diagonally up the steep. At the period of which we speak, ere it reached the main line of communication through the country, a reft, or chasm, in the steep wall towards the sea,—a nearly perpendicular rent, —left the mountain path without protection, save by a slender paling for the space of a few yards only. Nothing could be more dreary and terrific. Through this dizzy cleft, — the sides bare and abrupt, without ledge or projection, — the walls like gigantic buttresses, presenting their inaccessible barriers to the deep, — the distant horizon, raised to an unusual height by the point of sight and position of the spectator, seemed to mingle so softly and imperceptibly with the sky, that it appeared one wide sea of cloud, stretching to the foot of the cliff. From that fearful summit the billows were but as the waving of a summer cloud, undulating on the quiet atmosphere. The fishing bark, with its dun, squat, picturesque sail, looked as though floating in the sky, — a fairy boat poised on the calm ether.

As we before noticed, two persons were loitering up this path. They paused at the brink of the chasm. It might be for the purpose of gazing on the scene we have just described: but the lover's gaze was on his mistress, and the maiden's eye was bent on the ground.

" 'Tis even so, Adeline. We must part. And yet the time may come, when —— But thou art chill, Adeline. The words freeze ere they pass my lips, even as thine own; for I never yet could melt the frost-work from thy soul. Still silent? —Well. — I know thy heart is not another's; and yet thou dost hesitate, and linger, and turn away thy cold grey eyes, when I would fain kindle them from mine. Nay, Adeline; I know thou lovest me. Ay!

draw back so proudly, and offer up thine and thy true lover's happiness for ever on the altar of thy pride."

"Since thou knowest this heart so well," retorted the haughty maiden, "methinks it were a bootless wish to wear it on thy sleeve, save for the purpose of admiring thine own skill and bravery in the achievement."

"Thou wrongest me, Adeline; 'tis not my wish. Say thou art mine; we are then safe. No earthly power shall part us. But I warn thee, maiden, that long years of misery and anguish will be our portion, should we separate while our troth is yet unplighted. This ring," said he, drawing off his glove, "is indifferently well set. The bauble was made by a skilful and cunning workman. The pearls have the true orient tinge, and this opal hath an eye like the hue of the morning, changeable as—woman's favour. How bright at times!—warm and radiant with gladness, now dull, cold, hazy, and ——" unfeeling, he would have said, but he leaned on the slender barrier as he spoke, and his eye wandered away over the dim and distant wave, across which he was about to depart. Whether he saw it, or his eye was too intently fixed on the dark and appalling future, we presume not to determine.

"A woman's favour, like thy similes, Mortimer, hath its colour by reflection. Thou seest but thine own beam in't; the hue and temper of thy spirit. We have no form nor feeling of our own, forsooth; we but give back the irradiation we receive."

"Thou canst jest, Adeline. Thy chillness comes upon my spirit like the keen ice-wind; it freezes while it withers."

The maiden turned aside her head; perhaps to hide a gleam of tenderness that belied her speech.

"Adeline, dark hours of sorrow are before thee! Think not to escape."

He seized her hand.

"Should'st thou wed another, a doom is thine, — a doom from which even thought recoils."

He looked steadfastly upon her, but the maiden spoke not; a tear quivered through her drooping eye-lashes, and her lip grew pale.

"But I must away," continued Mortimer. "Yonder bark awaits me," and he drew her gently towards the brink. "It will part us, — perhaps for ever! No, no, not for ever. Thou wilt wed, — it may be, — and when I return — Horror!"

He started back, as from a spectre which his imagination had created.

"That ring — take it. Let it be thy monitor; and should another seek thy love, look on it; for it shall warn thee. It shall be a silent witness of thy thoughts — one that will watch over thee in my stead; for the genii of that ring," said he, playfully, "are my slaves."

But she returned the pledge.

"I cannot. Do not wind the links around me thus, lest they gall my spirit; lest I feel the fetters, and wish them broken!"

"Then I swear," said Mortimer vehemently, "no hand but thine shall wear it!"

He raised his arm, and the next moment the ring would have been hurled into the gulf, but, ere it fell, he cast another glance at his mistress. Her heart was full. The emotion she sought to quell, quivered convulsively on her

lip. He seized her hand; but, when he looked again upon the ring, it was broken!

By what a strange and mysterious link, are the finest and most subtle feelings connected with external forms and appearances! By what unseen process are they wrought out and developed; their hidden sources, the secret avenues of thought and emotion, discovered,—called forth by circumstances the most trivial and unimportant! Adeline turned pale; and Mortimer himself shuddered as he beheld the omen. But another train of feelings had taken possession of her bosom; or rather her thoughts had acquired a new tendency by this apparently casual circumstance; and, true to the bent and disposition of our nature, now that the slighted good was in danger of being withdrawn, she became anxious for its possession. She received the token. A slight crack upon its rim was visible, but this fracture did not prevent its being retained on the hand.

After this brief developement, their walk was concluded. They breathed no vows. Mortimer would not again urge her. A lock of hair only was exchanged; and, shortly, the last adieu was on their lips, and the broad deck of the vessel beneath his feet, whence he saw the tall cliff sink down into the ocean, and with it his hopes, that seemed to sink for ever into the same gulf!

Some few years afterwards, on a still evening, about the same time of the year, a boat was lowered from a distant vessel in the offing. Three men pulled ashore, as the broad full moon rose up, red and dim, from the mist that hung upon the sea. The roll of the ocean alone betokened its approach. Its melancholy murmur alone broke the universal stillness. The lights came out, one by one, from the village casements. The cattle were housed,

and the curs had crept to the hearth, save some of the younger sort, who, at intervals, worried themselves, fidgeting about, and making a mighty show of activity and watchfulness.

One of the passengers stepped hastily on shore. He spoke a few words to the rowers, who threw their oars into the boat, fastening her to the rocks. Afterwards they betook themselves to a tavern newly trimmed, where, swinging from a rude pole, hung the "*sign*" of a ship,—for *sign* it could only be called,—painted long ago, by some self-initiated, and village-immortalised artist, whose production had once been the wonder of the whole neighbourhood.

A roaring blaze revealed the whole interior, where pewter cups and well-scoured trenchers threw their bright glances upon all who wooed these dangerous allurements at "The Ship."

But the individual whom the rowers had put ashore withstood these tempting devices. He strode rapidly up the path, and paused not, until he approached the cliff, where the agony of one short hour had left its deep furrows for ever on his memory.

The incidents of that memorable day were then renewed with such vividness, that, on a sudden, writhing and dismayed, he hurried forward in the vain hope, it might seem, of flying from the anguish he could not control.

A dark, plain, stone house stood at no great distance, and hither his footsteps were now directed. A little gate opened into a gravel walk, sweeping round an oval grass plat before the door. He leaned upon the wicket, as though hesitating to enter. By this time the moon

rode high and clear above the mist which was yet slumbering on the ocean. She came forth gloriously, without a shadow or a cloud. The wide hemisphere was unveiled, but its bright orbs were softened by her gaze. The shadows, broad and distinct, lay projected on a slight hoar-frost, where a thousand splendours and a thousand crystals hung in the cold and dewy beam. Bright, tranquil, and unruffled was the world around him, — but the world within was dark and turbulent, — tossed, agitated, and overwhelmed by the deep untold anguish of the spirit.

The tyrant sway of the passions, like some desolating invader, can make a paradise into a desert, and the fruitful places into a wilderness. How different to Mortimer would have been the scene, viewed through another medium! His soul was ardent, devoted, full of high and glorious imaginings; but a blight was on them all, and they became chill and decayed, — an uninformed mass, without aim or vitality.

He was afraid to proceed, lest his worst suspicions might be confirmed. He had heard —— but we will not anticipate the sequel.

A loud barking announced the presence of an intruder, but the sagacious animal, when he had carefully snuffed out a recognition, fawned and whined upon him, running round and round towards the house, with gambols frolicsome and extravagant enough to have excited the smiles of any human being but Mortimer.

As he approached, he heard a soft, faint melody from within. It was her voice; — he could not be mistaken, though years had passed by; — though the dull tide of oblivion had effaced many an intervening record from the

tablet of his memory, those tones yet vibrated to his soul. His heart thrilled to their impression like two finely modulated strings, which produce a corresponding sympathy upon each other. He listened, almost breathless. The recollection came like a track of fire across his brain. Memory! how glorious, how terrible art thou! With the wand of the enchanter thou canst change every current of feeling into joy or woe. The same agency, nay, the same object, shall awaken the most opposite emotions. The simplest forms, and the subtlest agents, are alike to thee. Nature seems fashioned at thy will, and her attributes are but the instruments of thy power.

The melody that he heard was a wild and mournful ballad, which he had once given to Adeline, when the hours flew on, sparkling with delight, and — she had not forgotten him!

The thought was too thrilling to endure. His brain throbbed with ecstasy. Unable to restrain his impatience, he applied hastily to the door. Such was the excitement under which he laboured, that the very sound made him start back: it struck so chilly on his heart. Then came an interval of harrowing suspense. He shuddered when he heard the approaching footsteps, and could with difficulty address the servant who stood enquiring his errand.

"Is — is Adeline within?"

The menial silently surveyed the enquirer, as though doubtful in what manner to reply, ere he answered, —

"My mistress is at home, sir."

Mortimer stepped into the hall. The servant threw open the door, announcing his name, and Mortimer was in the presence of Adeline.

The meeting was too sudden for preliminary forms and courtesies. There was no time for preparation. The blow was struck, and a thousand idle enquiries were, perhaps, saved; but Adeline, after one short gaze of astonishment and dismay, covered her face; a low groan escaped her, and she threw herself convulsively on the chair.

Mortimer hastened to her relief, but she shrunk from his touch. She spoke not; her anguish was beyond utterance.

"Adeline!"

She shuddered, as though the sound once more awakened the slumbering echoes of memory.

"Leave me,—Mortimer," she cried. "I must not——"

"Leave thee!" It was repeated in a tone that no words can describe. Enquiry, apprehension, were depicted in his look, as if existence hung on a word; while a pause followed, compared with which, the rack were a bed of roses. The silence was too harrowing to sustain.

"And why? I know it all now," cried the unhappy Mortimer; and the broad impress of despair was upon his brow, legibly, indelibly written.

"I am here to redeem my pledge; and thou! Oh, Adeline! Why,—why? Say,—how is my trust requited? Were long years — too, too long to await my return? I have not had a thought thou hast not shared. And yet thou dost withhold thy troth!"

"It is plighted!"

"To whom?"

"To my husband!"

Though anticipating the reply, the words went like an arrow to his heart. We will not describe the separation.

With unusual speed, he descended the path towards the village. He rushed past the cleft with averted looks, fearful that he might be tempted to leap the gulf. He entered the tavern; but so changed in manner and appearance, that his companions, fearful that his senses were disordered, earnestly besought him to take some rest and refreshment.

In the end he was persuaded to retire to bed. But, ere long, fever and delirium had seized him; and, in the morning, he was pronounced, by a medical attendant, to be in extreme danger, requiring the interposition of rest and skill to effect his cure.

* * * *

It was in the cold and heavy mist of a December evening, that a female was seated upon the tall cliff above the chasm we have described. As the solitary gull came wheeling around her, she spoke to it with great eagerness and gesticulation.

"Leave me, — leave me!" she cried. "I must not now. Poor wanderer! art thou gone?" With an expression of the deepest bitterness and disappointment, she continued, "Why, — oh, why didst thou take back thy pledge? Nay, it is here still; but, — alas! 'tis broken. Broken!" and a scream so wild and pitiful escaped her, it was like the last agony of the spirit when riven from its shrine. Her hair, wet with the drizzly atmosphere, hung about her face. She suddenly threw it aside, as if listening.

"'Tis he! Again he comes. My — no, no; he *was* my lover! I have none now. I have a husband; but — he is unkind. Alas! why am I thus? I feel it! Oh,

merciful Heaven! my brain leaps; but I am not — indeed I am not mad!"

Saying this, she bounded down the cliff, into the path she had left, with surprising swiftness. Returning, she was met by her husband, with two servants, who were in search. He chid her harshly — brutally. He threatened — ay, he threatened restraint. She heard this; but he saw not the deep and inflexible purpose she had formed. Horror at the apprehension of confinement, which, in calmer intervals, she dreaded worse than death, prompted her to use every artifice to aid her escape. She was now calm and obedient; murmuring not at the temporary attendance to which she was subjected. She sought not the cliff and the deep chasm; but would sit for hours upon the shore, looking over the calm sea, with a look as calm and as deceitful.

Vigilance became relaxed; apprehension was lulled: she was again left to herself, and again she stole towards the cliff. Like to some guilty thing, she crept onward, often looking back lest she should be observed. Having attired herself with more than ordinary care, before leaving her chamber, she unlocked an ivory casket, with great caution, taking thence a ring, which she carefully disposed on her fore-finger. She looked with so intense a gaze upon this pledge — for it was the pledge of Mortimer — that she seemed to be watching its capricious glance, like the eye of destiny, as if her fate were revealed in its beautiful and mystic light.

Sunset was near, as she approached the cliff. She paused where the chasm opened out its deep vista upon the waters. They were now sparkling in the crimson

flush from a sky more than usually brilliant. Both sky and ocean were blent in one; the purple beam ran out so pure along the waves, that every billow might now be seen, every path and furrow of the deep.

Adeline climbed over the rail. She stood on that extreme verge, so fearful and abrupt that it might have rendered dizzy a stouter head than her own.

"This night are we married, Mortimer. The *ring* and the *cliff!*"

The ring, at this moment, shot forth a tremulous brightness; probably from participation with the glowing hues by which it was surrounded.

"The genii of that ring — said he not so? — they will bear me to him. Our couch is decked, and the bridal hymn —— Hark!"

It was only the sound from some passing skiff that crept along the waters, but Adeline thought she heard the voice of her lover.

"He calls me; when will he return?"

She looked anxiously on the ring, as though expecting a reply: but she saw its bright hues diminish, and gradually grow dim in the dull grey light which displaced the gaudy sunset.

"Oh, why art thou gone so soon?" Her heart seemed full, as though in the very agony of separation.

"I must away. His bark is on the deep; and he will not return."

She buried her head in her lap, and wept. But suddenly she started up; she looked on the distant wave as though she beheld some object approaching. She again climbed upon the rail, and gazed eagerly through the

twilight, on the billows now foaming back in triumph with the returning tide. Her features were yet beautiful, though wasted by disease; and, as she gazed, a smile, rapturous and bright, passed over, like a sunbeam on the dark billows. She waved her hand.

"I have waited for thee. Bear me hence. Haste! Oh, haste! they are here."

She listened. Her countenance grew more pale and agitated. Voices were heard, and footsteps, evidently approaching. She recognized the hated sound of her pursuers. Agony and despair were thy last ministers, unhappy victim! She wrapped her cloak closer to her form, and, with one wild and appalling shriek, leaped that dizzy height; by the foot of which her mangled remains were shortly discovered.

In the family of —— is a ring, taken from the finger of a female ancestor of the house, who leaped from "*The Lady's Cliff*,"—for such it continues to be called; and it is still said to be haunted by her spirit. The ring was found uninjured, save by a crack through the rim, where it seems bent by a sudden stroke. Superstition attaches strange stories to this relic. True enough, at times it appears almost gifted with intelligence; though, perhaps, the answer, intimated by the brilliancy or dimness of the stone, may often be construed according to the thoughts or wishes of the enquirer. It is kept in a little ivory box, and preserved with great care. It is said, there never was a question propounded to this oracle,—if done with a proper spirit, with a due and devout reverence, and a reliance on its wondrous efficacy,—but the ring, by

its brightness or its gloom, shadowed forth the good or evil destiny of the querent.

Mortimer recovered. In this village, many years afterwards, lived an old man, whose daily walk was to the cliff. From that height he would gaze, until the last hue of evening died upon the waves. He then returned, with a vacant and downcast look, sad and solitary, to his dwelling. He was buried there in the churchyard; and a plain-looking stone, with the initials C. M., still mark the spot called the STRANGER'S GRAVE.

THE

DEAD MAN'S HAND.

THE DEAD MAN'S HAND.

BRYN HALL, the scene, or rather the solution, of the following tradition, is now demolished. It was the ancient seat of the Gerards, by virtue of marriage between William Gerard, about the year 1280, with the daughter and sole heir of Peter de Bryn. It was built in a quadrangular form, with a spacious court-yard, to which admittance was gained by a narrow bridge over the moat surrounding the whole fabric. The gate-house was secured by massy doors well studded with iron; a curiously carved porch led to the great hall, where, on the chimney-piece, were displayed the arms of England, not older than the reign of James I. A railed gallery ran along one side, on which persons might stand to observe the entertainments below without mingling in them. It was supported by double pillars in front of pilasters, forming arches between, profusely ornamented by rich carved work. Most of these decorations, together with the carved wainscots, were taken to embellish Garswood Hall, near Ashton, a few miles distant, where the family resided after their removal.

In the windows were some armorial bearings of painted glass, the first quarterings beginning with the Leighs of Lyme, instead of Gerard or Bryn, as might have been expected. Here was a Roman Catholic chapel, and a priest, who continued long after the family had departed, having in his custody the hand mentioned in the following pages. It is still kept by them, or rather by the priest, who now resides at Garswood. Preserved with great care, in a white silk bag, it is still resorted to by many diseased persons, and wonderful cures are said to have been wrought by this saintly relic. It is called the Hand of Father Arrowsmith, — a priest, who is said to have been put to death at Lancaster for his religion, in the time of William III. When about to suffer, he desired his spiritual attendant to cut off his right hand, which should then have the power to work miraculous cures on those who had faith to believe in its efficacy. Not many years ago, a female, sick of the small pox, had it lying in bed with her every night for six weeks, in order to effect her recovery, which took place. A poor lad, living in Withy Grove, Manchester, afflicted with scrofulous sores, was rubbed with it; and, though it has been said he was miraculously restored, yet, upon enquiry, the assertion was found incorrect, inasmuch as he died in about a fortnight after the operation.

Not less devoid of truth is the tradition that Arrowsmith was hanged for witnessing a good confession. Having been found guilty of a rape, in all probability this story of his martyrdom and miraculous attestation to the truth of the cause for which he suffered, were contrived for the purpose of preventing the scandal that might

have come upon the church through the delinquency of an unworthy member.

One of the family of the Kenyons attended as under-sheriff at the execution; and it is said that he refused the culprit some trifling favour at the gallows, whereupon Arrowsmith denounced a curse upon him — to wit, that whilst the family could boast of an heir, so long they should never want a cripple; which prediction was supposed by the credulous to have been literally fulfilled.

THE DEAD MAN'S HAND.

"Yet stay, fair lady, turn again,
And dry those pearly tears;
For see, beneath this gown of grey,
Thy own true love appears."

Percy's Reliques.

WHAT a strange and appalling history would be that of superstition! how humiliating, how degrading to the boasted dignity of our nature! In all ages, this teeming source of error has yielded abundantly all varieties of

phantasms,—the sublime, the solemn, the horrible, and the ridiculous: a mildew, a blight, on the fairest blossoms of truth; an excrescence; a coat of rust, which eateth as a canker, and makes religion, which was given as a blessing and a boon to our perishing race, a burden and a curse. And yet neither good nor evil is unmixed. Such is the nature even of our most baneful impressions, that instances do arise where good may come from so corrupt a source. The connection between material and immaterial, between mind and matter, so operates, that sometimes, and in proportion to the strength of the impression, a change is wrought by the mere control of the mind over the bodily functions.

To this operation may be ascribed the wonder-workings of these latter days;—we do not question the effects thereby produced; but totally, unhesitatingly, deny the cause. Imagination, at times, doth so usurp the mastery over the animal and bodily faculties, that she has been known to suspend their ordinary processes, and to render the frame insensible even to the attacks of pain itself.

In one of the northern divisions of the county,—we know not the precise situation, nor is it needful to our purpose that we enquire,—there dwelt a comely maiden, who, at a period of little more than twenty summers from her birth, found herself in the undisturbed possession, if not enjoyment, of an abundant income, with a domain of more than ordinary fertility and extent. Her parents dying during the period of her youth, she, as the only offshoot of the family, held her dominion uncontrolled. That the possessor of such an abundant stock of liberty should wish to wear a chain, is, verily, a marvel not easily resolved: but so it was; and she seemed

never so well pleased as when the links were firmly riveted. The forging of this invisible chain was a work performed in secret. She felt her thrall, but she sighed not to be free! For, alas! a grievous malady had seized her. The light of her eyes, a brisk and winning gallant, in the shape of a male cousin, had departed. He went out to the wars, as was reported, and Ellen refused to be comforted. He knew not, peradventure, of her liking towards him. He was of a different creed, moreover, — a Catholic, — and she had, in the sovereignty of her caprice, treated him with something of petulance — he thought scorn. What a misfortune that two fond hearts should have wanted an interpreter!

She sat one evening in her bedchamber, and Bridget, her maid, a little Roman Catholic orphan, who had served her from a child, was busily engaged in preparing her mistress for the night's repose. Now Bridget was a zealous believer in saints, miracles, and the like; and Ellen would often disport herself gently on the subject.

"I wish I could believe in thy legends, and thy saints' gear; it would, verily, be a comfortable disposition of my thoughts, in all extremity, to have hope of a special interference."

"And why not?" said Bridget, who confessed thrice a year, and knew the marvellous histories of a dozen saints by rote.

"Because," said her mistress, "I did not imbibe thy faith with my mother's milk, as thou hast done. 'Tis part of thy very nature, wench; and thou couldst not but act in conformity thereto."

"There have we the better of our birthright. But, nevertheless, those who repent, and turn to the true

faith, have the same privileges; yet is it hard, as well it may be, to bend their stubborn nature to this belief. How comfortable, to have one's sins struck from the calendar, and to know that we are holy again as a little child, besides ailments of the body innumerable, that are cured, whenever we can bring our faith to its full exercise!"

"Well, Bridget, if I were a good Catholic, as now I am an unbeliever and a heretic, dost think that St. Somebody, or whoever I might take a fancy to for the purpose, would be propitiated by a few prayers and genuflexions, and restore me to health and — and —"

She faltered in her speech; the banter died away on her lips; memory gave a sudden twinge, and her heart grew dark under the dim cloud that was passing over.

"I'd answer for it, if you were a good Catholic, that Father O'Leary would cure you as readily as he did Davy Dean's sow, that went mad, and bit her master."

"But seeing that I am neither a good Catholic, nor even Davy Dean's sow, is there a saint in the whole calendar would think it worth while to work a miracle on such a wicked unbeliever as I am?"

"There's one way, as I've heard tell; that if ye take a sprig of St. John's wort, and say three *credos* over it, and a *pater-noster*, and lay it under your pillow, you shall dream of the remedy by which a cure may be wrought."

Ellen did not immediately reply to this suggestion, for she thought that no special revelation was needed to point out a remedy.

"I would give the world, if I had it, to know what my cousin William is doing," said she, in a musing fit, as though some sudden fancy had crossed her.

" And why may you not?" said the ready-witted maid; " yea, as sure as St: Peter 's at Rome, and that 's not to be gainsayed either by Turk or infidel."

" What, dost thou learn these crotchets in thy creed?" said Ellen.

" Nay," replied the other, " it is a bit of conjuration, not enjoined by the church; a kind of left-handed intercourse, which we get by stealth from other guess folk, I reckon, than the holy saints."

" Am I to dream of this, too?"

" Why, nay; you may be wide awake for that matter; but you must just take a phœnix feather in one hand, a cockatrice tooth in your mouth, and breathe on the glass, when, as the breath departs, they say your true love will appear therein."

" But he is not my true love, wench; and so I may not bind him with such spell, mayhap."

" How know ye that, fair mistress?"

" Go to; thou dost wound and vex me with thy questions. Hath he not been gone these five months, and never a word, good or bad, hath been rendered to me? Nay, did he not, ere he went, so deport himself with most cold and supercilious arrogance, and even with neglect and disdain?"

" Because, in your own bright self, lady, he had the first example; for of all the gay sparks that fluttered about you, there was never a one o' them that had to endure such chilling looks, and so haughty a bearing, as were usually reserved for him."

" Hold thy tongue; thou dost presume too much, methinks, upon thy former freedoms, wench. I like not such unguarded speech."

Bridget was silent at this rebuke; and, whatever was uppermost in her thoughts, no more was said that night.

The following days Ellen was much worse. The disease appeared to be rapidly gaining strength, and the maiden seemed doomed to an early grave.

"And is n't it a silly thing for one like you to die so soon?" said Bridget; "I can ask for you, what I would not have the face to ask for myself."

Ellen smiled. The hectic flush was apparently on her cheek; and the fever that fed it was on her vitals; — at least, so said the village chroniclers by whom it was told.

What was the precise nature of the request that Bridget made the next Sunday from her patron saint, we know not; but she seemed mightily occupied therewith; and, if ever there was faith in such an intercessor, Bridget felt assured that her patron would intercede on behalf of her mistress, though a heretic and unbeliever. But St. Bridget was told, in all likelihood, that Ellen must necessarily be a convert to the true faith, should a miracle be wrought in her favour.

The following morning Bridget was early at the bedside of her mistress, with a countenance more than usually indicative of some important communication. But Ellen was the first to break silence.

"I have had a strange dream last night."

"So I guessed," said Bridget, with a face of great importance; "and what said the holy saint, my good kind patron?"

"Bless thy silly face, it was nó woman saint that I saw."

Bridget looked sad and chop-fallen at this intimation; she was fearful that her prayers were unheeded.

"There came, as I thought, in my dream," said Ellen, "a long-robed priest to my bedside."

"Sure enough, then, St. Bridget, blessings on her wherever she be! sent him."

"Prithee, be quiet, and listen. — He stood there, methought, and when I asked him of his errand, he raised his right arm, and I saw that the hand was wanting, being taken off at the wrist. I marvelled exceedingly at this strange apparition; but, as I was a going to question him thereon, I awoke. I know not why, but the vision sorely troubled me, especially when again going to sleep, for it was repeated thrice."

"It's a riddle," said Bridget, "and one with a heavy meaning in it, too, if we could find it out."

"Verily, I think so," said Ellen; "for the impress doth not pass away like that from ordinary dreams; but rests with a deep and solemn power upon my spirit, such as I can neither throw off, nor patiently endure."

"I'll unriddle it for you, or go a pilgrimage to our Lady at Loretto," said Bridget, determined not to be behindhand in her curiosity. So she set her woman's wits immediately to work; yet she saw her mistress daily losing strength, and no clue was obtained by which to know the interpretation of the vision. She consulted her confessor; but he was equally at a loss with herself, and knew not the nature of the dream, nor its meaning.

One day Mistress Bridget brought in a tall beggar-woman, dumb, or pretendedly so, and apparently deaf. She made many signs that the gift of forcknowledge was in her possession, though she seemed herself to have pro-

fited little by so dangerous an endowment. Ellen, being persuaded by her maid, craved a specimen of this wonderful art. The hag, a smoke-dried, dirty-looking beldame, with a patch over one eye, and an idiotic expression of face, began to mutter and make an odd noise at the sight of the sick lady. She took a piece of chalk from her handkerchief, and began her work of divination. First she drew a circle on the floor, as a boundary, or frame, and, within it, she put many uncouth and crabbed signs; but their meaning was perfectly unintelligible. Under this she sketched something like unto a sword, then a hideous figure was attached to it, with a soldier's cap on his head. Before him was a heart, that seemed to hang, as it were, on the point of this long sword; which when Ellen saw, she changed colour, but attempted to smile; yet she only betrayed her agitation. The dumb operator drew one hand across her own breast, and, with the other, pointed to the lady; which appeared to Ellen as though intimating that a soldier had won her heart, and that this was the true cause of her illness. Such an interpretation, perchance, was but the conscious monitor speaking from within, as it invested this unmeaning hieroglyphic with the hue and likeness of its own fancies. But more marvellous still was the subsequent proceeding. Having revealed the cause, it seemed as though she were about to point out, obscurely as before, the method and means of cure. When she had drawn the long unshapely representation of a cloak, above it was placed something like unto a human head, without helm or other covering: and to this figure two arms were added; one having a huge hand, displayed proper, as the heralds say, the other arm entirely destitute of this

useful appendage. Ellen at once remembered her dream, and watched the process even with more interest than before.

The hand, which should have been attached to the wrist was now drawn, distinct from the rest, as though grasping a heart wounded by the sword; and, doubtless, the interpretation, according to Bridget's opinion, was, that the application of a hand, which had been severed from the body, would alone cure the disease under which she pined. The dumb prophetess did not communicate further on the subject; and, after having received her bounty, she departed.

"How very strange!" said Ellen.

"Marvellous enough," said the maid; "but St. Bridget hath doubtless sent her to your help. Nay, peradventure, it was St. Bridget herself! Save us, what a kind, good creature she must be!"

Here she crossed herself with great fervour, forgetting that even a saint among womankind would hardly feign herself dumb.

"There is some mystery about this hand," thought Ellen; but where to seek for a solution, was a mystery of equal magnitude with the rest. Bridget was sure, from the disclosures already vouchsafed, that the needful directions would not be withheld.

Ellen felt restless and disturbed for a while after this event; but her sensations were again reverting to their ordinary channel, when, one morning, she awoke in a fearful trepidation. She said that the figure of a human hand was visible in her slumbers; that it led the way, pointing to an old house, like a fortified mansion, with a moat and gatehouse before the main entrance. As she

followed, the hand seemed to twine its fingers about her heart, and, for that time, she felt relieved of her pain. So vividly was the scene impressed upon her imagination, that she felt assured she should recognise the building again, and especially the interior, where, in a stately chamber, the miraculous cure was performed. Bridget rubbed her hands, and capered about for joy.

"The name of St. Bridget be praised!" said she, and vowed twenty things in a breath; but the principal of these was an embroidered petticoat, which vow she expected her mistress would enable her to fulfil. Indeed, she had long set her mind upon this lustrous piece of attire, and was waiting, somewhat impatiently, the time when it should be allotted to her. So audibly had she made her vow, that Ellen was reminded of her pertinacity in still hoarding this precious and coveted piece of finery, which Bridget looked upon as an unwarrantable detention of her perquisites.

The cunning maid having obtained the garment for her patron saint, what harm was there in wearing it, a while at least, for her sake?

Affairs went on for a little time in this dubious state; but the continued and increasing illness of Ellen made it expedient that a change of air should be attempted, and the journey accomplished by short and easy travel. The family coach was brought out; and Mistress Bridget, invested with the dignities of her office, went forth as attendant of the body, and principal conductor of stores and packages.

Journeying southwards, at a slow pace, pausing to take a look, where there was any object worth the attention, they came one afternoon, about the fourth day from their

departure, to Wigan. When they had journeyed thence, a mile or so, as they were passing down a jolting road, Bridget, whose curious eye was ever on the look out, suddenly exclaimed, at the same time pointing through the window —

"I declare if there is not dummy again yonder!"

Ellen beheld the dumb sibyl, whose predictions were not forgotten. Bridget, by her looks, seemed to ask leave to stop the carriage, and hold another conference with the woman; and Ellen, whom illness had rendered somewhat passive in such matters, did not make any opposition. Having accosted this walking oracle, Bridget courtesied with great reverence, peradventure fancying that St. Bridget herself might be again embodied before her; but the beldame went straight to the carriage, addressing herself to the invalid within, by pointing to her breast, and making divers motions of the like signification, which were not easy to be understood, even by the party for whom they were intended. The prophetess seemed fully to comprehend that her symbolic representations were unintelligible, and no fitting place being at hand whereon they could be readily portrayed, she strove with the greater vehemence to explain her meaning. There appeared a more than ordinary anxiety, on her part, to communicate something of importance; and the travellers looked as though fully aware of it. Her most unequivocal signs, however, were to this purport, — that they should not proceed further. Ellen, impelled by fear and curiosity, spoke aloud,

"Surely we are not to remain here, at the beck of this woman!"

The one-eyed sibyl nodded an affirmative. This, at any rate, helped them to an easier mode of communication,

finding that she was not deaf, as they had hitherto supposed.

"And whither shall we proceed?"

The woman here pointed to a narrow lane, on the right of the main road they were pursuing.

"Truly that seems but an indifferent path. Wherefore should we turn in thither?" enquired Ellen.

Again the prophetess pointed to her own breast, and then at the bosom of the invalid.

"By this token I understand, that in so doing I am to expect some relief."

Again nodded the officious intruder.

"But how shall that relief be obtained?"

The woman here lifted up her hand, again pointing towards the path by which they should proceed.

"Go and see, I suppose thou would'st say," said Ellen.

Another affirmatory nod was the answer.

"Wilt thou be our guide?"

The person addressed, here darted a look at Ellen, which seemed to express pleasure at the request, if pleasure it might be called, that could irradiate such an aspect. She put out her hand for the customary largess, ere setting forward as their guide on the expedition. Some difficulty now arose, by reason of the straitness of the path; but their dumb leader hastened up the lane with unusual speed, beckoning that they should follow. From this signal it appeared that there was sufficient room, and the postilion addressed himself to proceed by so unusual a route.

They went forward for about a mile, with little difficulty; but a sudden turn, almost at right angles with their course, presented an obstacle, which the driver hesitated whether

or not to encounter; but it was impossible to return; though they were not without serious fears that the weird woman might lead them on to a situation from which they could not extricate themselves. Still she beckoned them forward, until they emerged into another and a wider road, on which they travelled without further impediment.

Ellen, whose eyes were abundantly occupied, suddenly assumed a look of greater fixedness and intensity. For a while she seemed nearly speechless with amazement. At length she cried —

"'Tis there! — There!"

Bridget looked forth, but saw nothing worthy of remark, save an old gatehouse, over a dark lazy moat, secured by heavy wooden doors.

This gatehouse was apparently the entrance to a court, or quadrangle, inclosed by buildings of wood and plaster of the like antiquity. Their guide stood on the bridge, as though to intimate that their wanderings would here terminate.

"I have seen it before," said Ellen, with great solemnity and emotion. Bridget, perhaps, fancied her mistress's thoughts were wandering strangely, and was just going to recommend rest, and a little of the medicine she carried, when Ellen again spoke, as though sensible of some incoherency in her remark: — "In my dreams, Bridget."

"St. Bridget and the Virgin be praised! Is this the house you saw when —?"

"The very same. I should know it again; nor should I forget it, if I were to live to the age of the patriarchs."

"It's an evident answer to my prayers," said Bridget; and here the devout enthusiast began to recite, internally, some holy ejaculations, which, if they did not possess any

positive efficacy, were at least serviceable in allaying the excitement under which she laboured.

Ellen determined to alight and witness the issue of the adventure; so, in due time, these forlorn damsels were seen advancing over the bridge unto this enchanted castle.

The beldame knocked loudly at the gate, and immediately she sprung back; but when the travellers again looked round, she was gone!

Now were they in a precious dilemma. Two females before a stranger's gate; the warder a coming, when their business would, of necessity, be demanded. A tread, every footstep of which might have been passing over them, was close at hand. The bolts shrieked; the gate shook, and a curious face peeped forth to enquire their errand. Bridget, whose ready tongue rarely refused its office, replied, —

"Is there a Catholic priest hereabout? for we would fain have a word with one of that persuasion."

The grim warder smiled.

"Ye have not far to go for such an one," said he; but ye be far off comers, I reckon, or ye would have known Bryn Hall, belike, the dwelling place of the noble house of Gerard, that hath never been without a priest and an altar therein."

He threw the gate wide open, and invited them to follow: after which, he led them through a clumsily ornamented porch into the great hall; at the end of which was a low gallery, supported by pillars and pilasters richly and profusely carved. From these, arches were sprung; and a flight of stairs, at one end, led to the upper chambers.

Their guide preceded them into a small wainscotted

room, fitted up as a study, or perhaps an oratory in those days. A wooden crucifix, with a representation of the Saviour carved in ivory, was placed in a recess, occasionally covered by a green curtain. Shelves, laden with books, occupied the further end of the room, and writing materials were laid upon an oak trestle or table, before which sat a tall white-haired personage, in a suit of sables, to whose further protection the porter left his charge.

Ellen had suffered herself to be led passive, hitherto, by her maid; but when she saw that they were now fairly committed to the disposal of the priest, for so he appeared, she felt uneasy and anxious to depart. The room, and the whole scene, were vividly brought to her recollection; for she fancied that, at one time or another, she had been present in a similar place.

Bridget courtesied to the holy father, who, doubting not that either a case of conscience, or a need be for confession, brought these strangers to his presence, began the usual interrogatories.

"Here is a sick person, most reverend sir, who would have the benefit of your prayers," said Bridget. The pale and wasting form that was by her side, sufficiently corroborated this reply.

"Daughter, the prayers of the church are for the penitent and believing; hast thou made shrift and a clear confession?"

Bridget was prepared for this question.

"She is not of the faith; but, peradventure, if aid be vouchsafed, she shall be reclaimed."

"If she have faith, I will cure her malady. What sayest thou?" He fixed his clear grey eye upon her, and Ellen felt as though some charm were already at work,

and a strange tingling went through her frame. She stammered out something like an assent, when the priest carefully proceeded to unlock a little cabinet, inlaid with ivory and gold, from which he took out a white silk bag, that diffused a grateful perfume through the chamber. He offered up a prayer before he unloosed the strings; after which, with great formality and reverence, he drew forth a human hand, dried and preserved, apparently by some mysterious process, in all its substance and proportions. Ellen was dumb with astonishment. Bridget could with difficulty refrain from falling on her knees before this holy relic; and her delight would easily have run over in some form of religious extravagance, had it been suffered to have free vent. To this relic, doubtless, had the predictions referred; and she doubted not its power and efficacy.

"This rare and priceless thing," said the priest, "was once the right hand of an English martyr, Father Arrowsmith by name, put to death for his holy profession. In consideration whereof, it is permitted, by the will of the Supreme, that an honourable testimony be rendered to his fidelity, by the miracles that it doth and shall work to the end of time. Rub it thrice on the part affected, and mark the result. If thou receive it with humility and faith, trusting in Heaven, from whence alone the healing virtue doth flow, — these holy relics being, as it were, but the appointed channels and conduits of his mercy, — thou shalt assuredly be healed."

But Ellen was at some loss to know the precise situation of her complaint, until she recollected the picture drawn by the dumb fortune-teller, who described the heart alone as touched by this miraculous hand. Yet, in

what manner to make the application was a matter of some difficulty.

Bridget again relieved her from the dilemma.

"If it so please your reverence, the seat of the complaint is not visible. Suffer us to use it privately. We will not carry forth nor misuse this precious keepsake; for I have been brought up in the nurture of the Holy Church, and am well instructed in her ceremonies."

"I fear not for the harm that can happen to it, by reason of ungodly or mischievous devices. If taken away, it would assuredly return hither. Should the lady have some inward ailment, let her lay it as near as may be to the part where she feels afflicted, and keep it there for a space, until she findeth help."

The two visiters were then shown into another chamber; and here Bridget, with great devoutness, and a firm faith in its efficiency, placed the dead cold hand upon her mistress's heart. Ellen shuddered when she felt its death-like touch. It was either fancy, or something more, but she really felt as though a load were suddenly taken away,—an oppression, an incubus, that had continually brooded over her, was gone. Surprised, and lightened of her burden, she returned into the oratory, and gave back the relic, along with a liberal offering, into the hands of the priest. He said there would scarcely be occasion for a repetition of the act, as it was evident the faith of the recipient had wrought its proper work.

The day by this time being far spent, the priest begged permission to introduce Ellen to Lady Gerard, who, he said, would be much gratified to afford them entertainment, and, if need were, shelter for the night. On hearing the name of her visiter, this kind lady would take no

denial, but expressed herself warmly on the folly and imprudence of an invalid being exposed to the night air; and Ellen, delighted with the change she felt, was all compliance and good nature. After a little hesitation, she suffered her first refusals to be overcome, and the night wore on with pleasant converse. By little and little, Lady Gerard gained the confidence of Ellen, who seemed glad that she could now speak freely on the subject nearest to her heart.

"It is marvellous enough," continued Lady Gerard, "that you should have been conducted hither; for in this house there is a magic mirror, which may, peradventure, disclose what shall relieve your anxiety. On being looked into, after suitable preparations, it is said,—for I never tried the experiment,—to show wondrous images within its charmed surface; and like the glass of Cornelius Agrippa, of which we have a tractate in the library chamber, will show what an absent person is doing, if the party questioning be sincere, and anxious for his welfare."

"I have long wished," said the blushing Ellen, "that I might see him of whom our evening's discourse hath, perchance, been too much conversant. I would not for worlds that he knew of my wish; but if I could see him once more, and know the bearing of his thoughts toward me, I could now, methinks, die content."

"This very night, then, let us consult the oracle," said Lady Gerard; "but there must not be any witness to our exploit; so while away your impatience as best you may, until I have made the needful preparations for our adventure."

Ellen could not repress her agitation when, after waiting alone for a little time, her kind hostess came to sum-

mon her to the trial. She was conducted up the staircase before mentioned, and through a corridor of some length. The lamp grew pale and sickly in the cold wind of the galleries they trod. Soon, however, they paused before a low door. Lady Gerard pressed her finger on her lip, in token of silence. She then blew out the light, and they were involved in total darkness. Taking hold of Ellen's arm, which trembled excessively, within her own, she opened the door, but not a ray was yet visible. She was conducted to a seat, and Lady Gerard whispered that she should be still. Suddenly a light flashed forth on the opposite side, and Ellen saw that it came from a huge antique mirror. A form, in male attire, was there discernible. With a slow and melancholy pace he came forward, and his lips seemed to move. It was,—she could not be mistaken,—it was her cousin William! She thought he looked pale and agitated. He carried a light which, as it glimmered on his features, showed that they were the index of some internal and conflicting emotion. He sat down. He passed one hand over his brow, and she thought that a sigh laboured from his lips; but as she gazed, the light grew dim, and, ere long, the mirror ceasing to be illuminated, again left them in total darkness. A few minutes elapsed, which were swollen to long hours in the estimation of the anxious and wondering enquirer. Her companion again whispered that she should await the result in silence. Suddenly the light flashed out as before, and she saw the dumb fortune-teller instead of the individual she expected. Her features were more writhen and distorted than ever; and she seemed to mutter, it might be, some malignant spell, some charm, the operation of which was for some unknown and diabolical

intent. Ellen shuddered as the weird woman took a paper roll from her bosom. Unfolding it, there was displayed the figure of her lover, as she supposed, kneeling, while he held out his hands toward the obdurate heart which he in vain attempted to grasp.

"I have wronged him," said Ellen in a whisper to her companion; "if I interpret these images aright, he now sighs for my favour; and—would that we had known each other ere it was too late!"

"He knows now," said Lady Gerard; and immediately the dumb prophetess was at her side. She threw off a disguise, ingeniously contrived, and Ellen beheld her cousin William! The magic mirror was but an aperture through the wainscot, into another apartment; and the plot had been arranged in the first place by Mrs. Bridget, who had been confederate with the handsome, but somewhat haughty wooer, having for his torment a maiden as haughty and intractable as himself. Thus, two loving hearts had nigh been broken for lack of an interpreter. William's absence had taken deeper hold on Ellen's finely tempered frame than was expected; and it was with sorrow and alarm that he heard of her illness. His distant relative, Lady Gerard, to whom he had retired for a season, spake of the marvellous hand, which, she was sure, being a devout and pious Catholic, would cure any disease incident to the human frame. It was absolutely needful that a cure should be attempted, along with some stratagem, to conquer the yet unbroken obstinacy in which, as with a double panoply, Ellen had arrayed herself. The result of the experiment has been shown. She was united to her cousin, ere a few months were old, and the "merrie spring" had melted in the warm lap of summer.

THE LOST FARM.

Drawn by G. Pickering. Engraved by E. Radclyffe &c.

THE LOST FARM, NEAR SOUTHPORT.

THE LOST FARM;

OR,

THE HAUNTED CASKET.

" And when of me his leave he tuik,
The tears they wat mine ee,
I gave tull him a parting luik,
' My benison gang wi' thee;
God speed thee weil, mine ain dear heart,
For gane is all my joy;
My heart is rent, sith we maun part,
My handsome Gilderoy.'

" Of Gilderoy sae fraid they were,
They bound him mickle strong,
Tull Edenburrow they led him thair,
And on a gallows hung.
They hung him high aboon the rest,
He was sae trim a boy;
Thair dyed the youth whom I lued best,
My handsome Gilderoy."

On the flat, bare, sandy coast, near to South Port, now a modern bathing-place of great resort, described in the first series of this work, might be seen, some few years ago, a ruined barn, cottage, and other farm-yard appurtenances, around which the loose and drifting sand was accu-

mulated, covering, at the same time, some acres of scanty pasture, once held under lease and occupation by an honest fisherman, who earned a comfortable, if not an easy subsistence from his amphibious pursuits. The thatched roofs were broken through, — the walls rent and disfigured, — all wore the aspect of desolation and decay. Long grass had taken root, flourishing luxuriantly on the summit, though surrounded by a barren wilderness, a wide and almost boundless ocean of sand. The ruin was the only fertile spot in this dreary waste. Though painful and melancholy the aspect, still, as the sea-breeze came softly over, sighing gently on its time-worn furrows, and on the nodding plumes that decorated the crest of this aged and hoary relic of the past, the sensation, though pleasing, became mournful; the heart seemed linked with the unknown, the mysterious events of ages that are for ever gone, — feelings that make even a luxury of grief, prompted by that within us, "the joy of sorrow;" something more hallowed, more cherished in the heart's holiest shrine, than all the glare and glitter of enjoyment, — the present bliss, — which we prize only when it departs.

Many years ago, this humble tenement was the abode of George Grimes, the fisherman to whom we have just alluded. It was a dwelling one story only from the ground, as the general use was in these regions, ere modern edifices, staring forth in red, white, and green, — their bold and upstart pretensions outfacing and supplanting the lowly but picturesque abodes of the aboriginal inhabitants, — had overtopped and overshadowed these meek, rural, and primitive displays of architectural simplicity.

Grimes, we repeat, was of that amphibious class, common upon every coast, combining the occupations incident to land and water in his own proper person. Half fisherman, half farmer, he ploughed the seas with his keel, when upon land his coulter was out of use. He was nigh sixty; and had long settled down into that quiet nap-like sort of existence, when the passions are lulled, scarcely visible, as they creep over the stagnant current of life. He was hale and hard-featured; the lines on his visage betokening, if need were, a stern, decisive, and obstinate bent in his disposition, that might have issued in deeds of high and noble daring, had its possessor been thrown into circumstances favourable to the display. As matters stood, George was master of his own household. Here none questioned his authority; no profane irreverent approach ever awakening the dormant energies of his character, or thwarting the current, visible only by opposition.

His wife was a round, brown, heavy-cheeked, dark-eyed dame, with a cap white as the whitest goose of the flock that marched every morning from her barn doors to the common, where, by some little pool, a scanty and close-bitten herbage formed their daily subsistence. She wore a striped apron; the blue lines would have vied with the best Wigan check for breadth and distinctness. Her good-humoured mouth, reverse from her husband's, was usually puckered up at the corners into an expression of kindness, benignity, and mirth; the contrast greatly aided by proximity; for though George Grimes was benevolent and kind-hearted at the bottom, yet he was by no means apt to let these gentler feelings rise to the surface.

An only daughter was now passing within the precincts of womanhood. Her complexion, red, and — not white, reader — but of that rich, healthy, and wholesome tinge, perfect as an example of the real English brunette. Her face exhibited a beautiful modification of her father's hard and determined expression, blended with her mother's gentleness and placidity. A smile of thrilling sweetness would sometimes pass upon her calm and thoughtful countenance, always beautiful, — if such a term can be allowed in speaking of a brown, rosy, plump, and well-conditioned girl, of good stature, whose form had not been squeezed into shape, nor her linsey-woolsey flourished into flounce and farthingale. Her hair hung in bright clusters on her brow; — fresh from Nature's toilet; their wild untutored elegance was singular and bewitching. Indeed, Catherine, or "Kattern," as she was more generally called, was the cynosure of this clime, — a jewel, that needed not the foil of its homely setting; the envy and admiration of the whole neighbourhood, — well known at church, and at Ormskirk market, where she attended weekly, — at the latter place to dispose of her produce. Here she was the torment of many a rustic, unable to conquer, or even to understand, the power by which his heart was taken captive.

Avarice was the besetting sin of her father. He was always fearful of becoming poor, and "not paying his way," as he called it. Yet was it suspected that George Grimes had a "powerfu'" hoard, concealed both from his family and friends. Money he doated on. It was an undoubted fact, that many a shining face went into the coffer of old Grimes that was never again seen perform-

ing the common every-day functions of currency and traffic.

He was always a dreaming, too, that he had found treasure. Often he would spend the greater part of a morning tide in pacing the brink of the boiling waves, hoping to find there some coinage of his brain that had been his dream on the preceding night. South Port then existed not, at least in name. No gay and laughing crowds fluttered on the margin of the deep. No lines of well-trimmed "green-eyed" houses looked on, nor boats with their dancing pennons and bright forms shone gallantly on the waves. All was bleak, bare, and unappropriated. The very air seemed tenantless, save when the solitary gull came sailing on heavily with the approaching tide, screaming over the gorge she beheld rising on the billows. The loud lunge of the sea was interrupted solely by the cry of the fisherman, and the "cockler's" whistle, plying his scanty trade among the shoals and sandbanks about the coast. It is scarcely possible to conceive a situation more desolate and uninviting. Hills of arid sand skirting the beach, without vegetation or enclosure, except where the withered bent, and little golden-starred stonecrop, gave their own wild and peculiar aspect to the scene. The shore is flat and unbroken to the very horizon, where the tide, retreating to its extreme verge, throws up a dim sparkle in the distance; Nature, even here, displaying her never-ceasing round of reproduction and decay, of advance and retrocession.

We had almost forgotten that there was another inmate of the household, — a tall, thick-browed, high-cheeked menial, whose coarse habiliments displayed a well-proportioned shape, and shoulders of an athletic

width. He had been engaged at the farm barely twelve months before the date of our narrative: and, at the first, a more egregious simpleton, as to farming and fishing operations, never drew a net, or whistled at the plough-tail. Yet he came well recommended by a Catholic gentleman in the neighbourhood, as a stout servant of all work, who would serve Grimes honestly, and for moderate wages. He had one excellence, or defect, as it might be, — that which we impute to one dumb from his birth, but not deaf. He perfectly understood, what was spoken, though, to make known his wishes, he was obliged to have recourse to signs or writing. In the former accomplishment he seemed to be well skilled, for he often elucidated his meaning by rude sketches in chalk upon the floor and table. There was a mystery about his appearance he cared not to divulge. His country and connections, too, were equally unknown. By the neighbours it was often suspected that he dealt with the Evil One. The "evil eye" was sometimes attributed to him; and the signs and chalkings were supposed to be mystic emblems of the future, into the hidden secrets of which he had the power of directing his enquiries.

He was apt in learning, and served George Grimes diligently and faithfully. He soon became acquainted with the various duties of the farm; and could unreef a sail, or make a net, with the best labourer in the parish.

His only companion was Catherine. She taught him to knit, and to make nets; directed him how to find the best peats, and showed him where the rabbits burrowed, and the larks and lapwings made their nests. Sometimes the instructress and her pupil would sit on the sandhills, and watch the sun sink down upon the ocean; some-

times they would gather shells, when the day's work was over, and string them in fantastic chaplets, which "*Dummy*" was very expert in contriving. He could converse with Kattern without difficulty. He had taught her his vocabulary of signs, and the maiden liked to observe his strange remarks and enquiries on passing events.

In the forenoon of a dark, threatening, and squally day, just before high tide, Grimes and his assistant had trudged towards the beach, intending to go out with the boat for a little while. The weather having been stormy of late, supplies were becoming scanty, and he wanted a few fish for their own use. They purposed to take the smaller boat only, hoping to be back with the next flood.

Toiling through the sand drifts, they came to an opening between the hills, which looked immediately on the beach. The sky was black and heavy on the horizon, towards the south-west. Round hard-edged clouds rode on from the main body, like flying squadrons, "grim couriers" of the storm. Here and there, through an opening in the clouds, the sky was of a deep, vivid, and intense blue, contrasting wildly with the rolling forms that tumbled about in turbulent confusion over the whole hemisphere. The sea was rising in breakers over the banks, hillocks of white foam riding on the crest of the billows; while the margin of the waves boiled and frothed like some vast cauldron.

The old man was not in a particularly complaisant mood that day. He was cross and snappish at trifles; irritable, and out of humour with himself. As he waded through the narrow defile, the dumb assistant behind him whistled faintly, and perhaps inadvertently. The fisherman looked back with a furious glance.

"Thou staring buzzard, is 't not enough to see sich a belly full o' wind i' brewing, but thou must whistle for more to keep it company. Hang thee for a he-witch; I never hear that accursed piping, but the wind follows, like sea-gulls to the garbage."

He had just turned a corner of the hill, when, looking round, he cried in a tone of terror and amazement.

"How now, Dick? Why, the boat is gone! what prank next? Thou careless unthrift, ill luck follows i' thy wake. She has slipped anchor, and the little Kitty is gone to the Manx herring-boats. I am ruined, thou limb of Old Nick! thou chub! thou ——."

Epithets were accumulating with prodigious force, when Dick, half closing his eyes, pointed to something dark, like a small boat, in the offing.

"What 's yon thee 'rt pointing at. A porpoise-back, I warrant. Ay, shake thy head, fool; 'twill bring my bonny Kitty back. Why thou 'rt staring like a bit-boomp in a gutter, catching frogs!"

Soon, however, the black speck became less ambiguous. George beheld a white stern heaving up and down. He ran forward as if to accelerate her return, crying out to his companion —

"A murrain catch thy tail, thou hast ever a longer sight than beseems thee. But she's coming sure enough; whatever she be!"

The old man gazed in wonder and suspense. He saw a sail unfurl; and the bark, — his own little tight, trim vessel, — come prancing on the white billows toward the shore. Soon he observed, sitting therein, perfectly at his ease, and unmindful of the near approach to, and the

portentous menaces of the owner, a figure clad in a garment of grey frieze, and a dark hairy cap on his head. One hand grasped the helm, and in the other he held the sheet, while he managed the boat with the most seamanlike skill and composure. His eye was fixed alternately on the shore and on the vane at the mast-head, as he came dancing through the surf, until he ran right upon the sands, where the boat grounded, and he sprang out upon the beach. The astonishment of Grimes can hardly be conceived, when, without once deigning to notice him, away went the stranger, vouchsafing neither thanks nor acknowledgments.

"Holloa, friend!" cried the incensed owner, "your disposition be freer than welcome, methinks. Holloa, I say, whither away so fast?" cried he impatiently, quickening his pace: but the stranger altered not his gait in the least, plodding steadily onwards, without appearing to notice the angry enquiries of his pursuer.

Soon the quick long strides of George Grimes brought him alongside of the person he addressed. Crossing before him, and almost intercepting his progress, he exclaimed —

"How now, friend? I'd be bold to know what thou be'st. I'm mightily beholden to thee for this favour."

A malicious grin quivered on his pale and angry countenance; but the stranger was unmoved. He merely waved his hand, as though kindly admonishing the enquirer to depart and leave him unmolested.

"Nay, good man; I'm not so soon put off. Prithee, save thy wit, for I'm not i' the humour for a jest this morning."

A melancholy smile accompanied the reply.

"Friend," said he, "I am beholden to thee for thy boat; and if thou art seeking conditions for the hire, I am willing to return its equivalent. Will this content thee?

Here George saw a bit of gold twinkling in the stranger's hand, which, like a beam on the dark waters, cleared his brow immediately.

He doffed his bonnet with great humility; but he was still curious about the matter, and more particularly as to what errand could have been requisite that boisterous morning. He stammered out some enquiry, and the stranger replied —

"Seek not to know; 'tis a doomed thing, and accursed. I would have given thrice my revenue, long ago, to have been rid o' the pest; but the wave hath swallowed it; — for ever, I would earnestly pray; and I am again free!"

Saying this, he passed on, leaving the astonished fisherman gaping mute with wonder, until a projecting sand-hill shut him out from their sight. During this interview, the dumb assistant was busily engaged with the boat, disposing of the nets and other implements, though, at the same time, evidently keeping a wary eye towards the stranger.

The little bark was soon afloat, the wind again filled the sails, and shortly she was seen flying over the billows, in defiance of "wind, water, and foul weather."

Grimes only purposed to cast the nets a mile or two from shore; for a good haul, at that period, was easily obtained much nearer the coast than is now practicable, — the fish being driven away, as the inhabitants superstitiously, but firmly, believe, by the quarrels that have taken place amongst the fishermen.

The bark went merrily on, leaping over the waves,

with the old mariner at her helm, and his dumb servant by the main sheet. The wind was blowing more steadily; the short and squally gusts had increased into a roaring gale, driving right ahead from the west. To work, however, they went; when, after a haul or two, the old man being engaged with the tackling, up came something in the net — at least old Grimes saw it, glittering amongst the fish, when he turned round; and it could have come from none other quarter than the sea.

Grimes drew it forth, and a fair and weighty casket it was, apparently uninjured. It was ornamented in the arabesque or antique fashion, inlaid with great care and skill. He grasped the prize; he poised it, to ascertain its gravity. It seemed to be both heavy and well filled.

This, at last, was the treasure he had often dreamt about, and the old man was almost frantic with joy. He hugged the unlooked-for messenger of wealth and good fortune, and putting the vessel about, made all sail for land.

Once more anchored, as near the beach as the retiring tide would allow, Grimes was too much engaged with his prize, to notice that "Dummy" took another route to the farm. Alone, with his bundle, and a pelting storm at his heels, the old man came to his dwelling. His early appearance was unexpected, but the women, little used to question his movements, immediately set about preparing for dinner. Depositing the casket, which was locked, in the oaken chest, or ark, at his bedside, he purposed to break it open, when he had procured the means, without harming the exterior.

The storm was rapidly gaining strength: the wind blew a hurricane; the thunder rolled on, louder and more frequent; and the rain came down in torrents. It was not

an ordinary tempest, but more like one of those tropical tornadoes, when the elements — fire, air, and water — seem to mingle in universal uproar, fighting and striving for the mastery.

"I think, o' my conscience, this wind is raised by the ould one," said the elder female. Scarcely were the words uttered, when the room seemed in a blaze, and a clap of thunder followed, so loud and appalling that it made the very walls to rock, and the whole fabric to reel with the stroke. The fisherman grew pale; the stranger's words rung in his ears. Was it the *casket* that he had committed to the deep, and of which he spake with such horror and execration? Strange as was the idea, yet he could not get rid of it; there seemed some connection between this fearful agony of nature and the mysterious treasure beneath his roof. The pipe fell from his mouth, and he sat listening, as he fancied, to the awful denunciations mingled with the howling storm, as though he had not power to move, or to avert his gaze from the window.

"Bless me, I had forgotten you were by yourself, father," said Katherine. "He will be almost drowned, if he has not ta'en shelter."

"I know not," muttered Grimes; "he left me on the shore. He might ha' been here long since."

The rain and wind abated for a brief space, when old Isabel appeared to be listening near the chamber door, where Grimes had left the casket.

"Mercy! what 's that, George?"

The fisherman was immediately all eye and ear; his head bent towards the door, which stood ajar.

"Who is there in the chamber?" enquired the old woman. "I hear it again."

"Hear! what?" replied he in great agitation.

"Something like an' it were a whispering there," replied the dame.

But a gust of wind again overwhelmed every other sound in its progress. Grimes thought he had heard a whisper, that made his blood freeze, and the very flesh to creep over his bones with terror.

But Katherine fearlessly entered; she looked cautiously about, but all was still, and she returned. Ere she closed the door, however, she heard a soft whisper, as though behind her. Naturally courageous, she immediately went back, but all was quiet as before; nor could she find that any person had been concealed in the apartment. She opened the chest where Grimes had stowed his booty, and, seeing the casket, she took it up, running hastily into the adjoining room.

"Why, father, what a pretty fairing you have brought me. I'se warrant, now, you would not have told me on't till after the wakes, if I had not seen it."

The old man looked as if he had seen a ghost. The whispers he had heard were, foolishly enough perhaps, connected in his mind with the presence of this mysterious thing.

"Take it back — back, wench, into the chest again. It was not for thee, hussy. A prize I fished up with the nets to-day."

"From the sea. Oh me, it is — it is unholy spoil. It has been dragged from some wreck. Cast it again to the greedy waters. They yield not their prey without a perilous struggle," said the girl.

The fisherman was silent. He looked thoughtful and

disturbed, while Katherine went back to put the treasure into its hiding-place.

"I wonder what that whispering could be?" thought the maiden, as she opened the old chest. Ere the lid was pulled down, she cast one look at the beautiful, but forbidden, intruder, and she was sure, — but imagination is a potent wizard, and works marvellously, — else she was sure that a slight movement was visible beneath the casket. She flung down the lid in great terror; pale and trembling she sprang out of the room, and sat down, silent and alarmed. Again the mysterious whispers were audible, in the momentary pauses of the blast.

"Save us," said the elder female; "I hear it again."

Bounce flew open the door of the bedchamber, and — in stalked their dumb assistant, as though he had chosen this mode of ingress, through the window of the sleeping room, rather than through the house door.

"Plague take thee! Where hast thou been?" said the old woman, partly relieved from her terrors. Yet was the whispering precisely as incomprehensible as before. The dumb menial that stood before her was obviously incapable even of this act of incipient speech.

"Where hast thou been, Dick?" enquired Grimes seriously. But the former pointed towards the beach.

"How long hast thou been yonder? — in the chamber, I mean."

Dick here fell into one of his ordinary fits of abstraction, from which neither menace nor entreaty could arouse him. As the old man turned from the window, he saw a blaze of light flashing suddenly upon the wall. The yard was filled with smoke. Rushing forth, the inmates found the barn thatch on fire, kindled, probably, by the

lightning. The rain prevented it from extending with much rapidity; and Grimes, mounting on the roof, soon extinguished the burning materials, before much damage had been the result. Misfortunes verily seemed to crowd upon each other; and that unlucky casket, doubtless, was the cause. When the old man, with his dame, returned into the house, Katherine was no where to be found. The "Dummy," too, was unaccountably absent. Anxious, and wondering, they awaited, hoping for their appearance at dinner; but their meal was cheerless and unvisited. Evening came, serene, deceitful as ever, — but their child did not return. They went out to make enquiries, but could find no clue to aid them in the search. Katherine had never staid from home so late. The parents were nigh distracted. There was evidently some connection between the disappearance of their servant and her own absence. Fearful surmises ensued. Suspicion strengthened into certainty. The casket was forgotten, in this fearful distress; and, after a fruitless search, they were forced to return.

On the third night after this occurrence, Grimes and his disconsolate helpmate were sitting by the turf embers, in moody silence, broken only by irregular whiffs from the pipe — the old man's universal solace. After a longer pull than usual, he abruptly exclaimed, —

"Three days, Isabel, and no tidings of the child. Who will comb down my grey hairs now, or read for us in the Book o' nights? We must linger on without help to our grave; none will care to keep us company."

"Woe's me!" cried the dame; and she wept sore; "my poor child! If I but knew what was come to her, I think

i' my heart I would be thankfu'. But what can have happen'd her? unless it be Dick indeed; and yet I think the lad was honest, though lungeous at times, and odd tempered. By next market, surely, we shall ha' tidings fra some end. But I trow, 'tis that fearsome burden ye brought with you, George, fra the sea, that has been the cause of a' this trouble."

Grimes started up. He threw the ashes from his pipe, and, without saying a word, went into the bedchamber. Lifting up the chest lid, he saw the casket safe, and, apparently, undisturbed. He drew it fearlessly forth, and vowed that he would throw it into the sea again, without further ado, on the morrow. It felt much lighter, however, than before; but not another night should it pass under his roof; so he threw it beside a turf heap in the yard. His heart, too, felt lighter as he cast the abominable thing from him; and he was sure it was this mischievous inmate alone that had wrought such woe in his hitherto happy and quiet household.

Morning came; and Grimes, for the first time since his loss, took the boat, committing himself, alone, with the haunted casket, on the sea. It was a lovely morning as ever sun shone upon; the waters were comparatively smooth; and the tide brought one of those refreshing breezes on its bosom, so stimulating and healthful to the invalid.

But Grimes thought not of the brightness or beauty of the morning. With the helm in his hand, one light sail being stretched out to the wind, he was steering through the intricate channel, and amongst the sand-banks which render the coast so dangerous even to those best acquainted with its perils.

He stood out to a considerable distance, intending to have depth and sea-room enough to drown his burden.

The breeze was fair, the sea was bright, and the mariner sailed on. He determined, this time at least, that the casket should be sent far enough out of harm's way.

"If that plaguy thing had been down deep enough before," thought he, "this mischief had not happened." He looked at it, and thought, again, "How very sad to part with so beautiful a treasure." He had not observed before that the lid was unlocked. He might as well peep before it should be hidden for ever beneath the dark billows. He lifted up the rim of the coffer cautiously; he trembled as the hinges gave way; and — it was empty!

"I am a fool!" thought he; "a downright fool. An empty box can have nothing to do with ——"

But, as if to belie his own conclusions, and to convince him that peril and misfortune must attend the presence of that mysterious thing, he having just quitted the helm for a more convenient examination, a sudden squall nearly upset the boat. Fortunately she righted; but not before most of the moveables were tossed out, including the cause of all his troubles. This, at any rate, was lucky, and cheaply purchased with the loss and breakage of his marine stores.

The tide was still coming in, though nearly at the height, and Grimes floated, merrily, to land. After hauling the boat ashore, he stood, for a moment, looking towards the sea; when he saw, dancing like a spectre on the very edge of the wave that broke in a thousand bubbles at his feet, the identical box he had taken such pains to commit to the safe keeping of that perilous deep.

It was evidently pursuing him. He would have fled, but fear had arrested his footsteps. He did not recollect that the box was now empty, and floated from its own buoyancy.

"It will not drown," thought he. After a little reflection, he resolved to dispose of it in some other manner.

"It will haunt me as long as it is above ground. I'll bury it." In pursuance of this wholesome resolve, he took it home again. Digging a deep grave in the peat moss behind his cottage, he thrust in the object of his apprehensions, trusting that he was now safe from its power.

But noises, horrid and unaccountable, disturbed him. Demons had surely chosen his dwelling for their head quarters. Nor day nor night could he rest, — fancying that a whole legion of them were haunting him. He seemed to be the sport and prey of his own terrors; and, with a heavy heart, he resolved to quit, though suffering a grievous loss by the removal.

The story of the haunted casket, with many additions and improvements, soon got abroad. No one dared to pass the house after nightfall, and "The Lost Farm" has ever since been tenantless.

Grimes removed to another in a few weeks; but his happiness and his hopes were for ever dissipated by the mysterious intruder. Hearing no tidings from his daughter, he determined, several weeks after the adventure, to sally forth in quest of intelligence.

It was a cold, blustery morning, when the old man set out on his errand. He was clad in a coarse blue frieze coat, with the usual complement of large, white, plated buttons. His head was sheltered by an oil-case-covered hat, tied

down with a blue and white check handkerchief; and he held a long stick before him, at arm's length, on which his sorrowful and drooping frame hung more heavily than usual. He had grown a dozen years older, at least, in less than as many weeks; and when he came to Church Town, having taken the by-path through the hills, he was fain to rest himself a while at the inn door. Before it stood several carts, on their way towards Preston, whither they were bound for the disposal of their produce on the morrow. Grimes thought he might as well make some enquiries there; Katherine having, at times, visited that remote town to make purchases. He would have company too, if he went with the carts, and a lift now and then if he were tired; so, throwing down his bundle, he entered the house, intimating his wish that they should join company.

"To Preston, lad?" said a jolly carter, holding a pewter pot that seemed as if glued to his hard fist. "Rare doings there, old one. What! thee wants to look at the fun, I warrant. Why, the rebels ha' been packed off to Lunnun, long sin'; but we han had some on 'em back again; that is, thou sees, their Papist heads were sent back, i' pickle, into these parts, and one on 'em grins savagely afore the Town Ha'."

Grimes knew little of political niceties, or whether kings *de facto*, or *de jure*, were better entitled to the throne.

The late disturbances had not reached these districts; so that the rebellion of 1745 might as well have happened in Kamtschatka, or Japan, for any personal knowledge that old Grimes had of the matter.

"Rebels!" said he; "I have heard a somewhat of this business; though I know nothing, and care less, about them cannibals."

"Then what be'st thee for in such a hurry to Preston?"

"I had a daughter; but she has left me; the staff and comfort of my old age, when I stood most in need of the prop!" Here the old man drew his hat over his brows, partly turning aside.

"Cheer up, friend," said another; "thy daughter, may be, is gone wi' Prince Charlie, when he piped through Preston, 'Hie thee, Charlie, hame again!'"

This malicious sally raised a loud laugh: but the old man heard it with great agony and consternation; for though a bow drawn at a venture, — a chance expression merely, intended as a clever hit at the women's expense, who had followed in the train of the rebels, — Grimes construed the passage literally; and, from that time, it ran continually in his head, that his daughter's absence would be found to have some connection with these events.

"Hang thy jibes!" said the first speaker, for whom this piece of wit was more especially intended; "hang thee, I'll knock thy neck straight; pepper me but I will!"

This worthy had a wife, who incontinently had contributed to augment the rebel train, when the Prince, in far different plight, on the 27th of November, 1745, passed through Preston, on his route to London, piping "The king shall have his own again."

A fray was nigh commencing, — a circumstance not at all unusual in those turbulent times, — but the master of the band speedily interfered, threatening displeasure and a wholesome discipline to his refractory servants.

Grimes accompanied them on their journey, riding,

walking, and gossiping, at irregular intervals; during which he learned much news, relating to the aspect and circumstances of the time, the names of the leaders, and those attainted and condemned, in this hasty and ill-timed rebellion. A considerable number of Lancashire partisans, officers of the Manchester regiment, commanded by Colonel Townley, had been conveyed to London, and tried for high treason, in July 1746. Some were reprieved and pardoned; others were executed, with all the horrid accompaniments prescribed by the law. The heads of Townley, and one Captain Fletcher, were placed upon Temple Bar. The heads of seven others, having been preserved in spirits, were, at that time, ornamenting posterns and public thoroughfares in Manchester, Preston, Wigan, and Carlisle, to the great comfort of the loyal and well-disposed, and the grievous terror of the little children who passed in and out thereat. Others, the noble leaders of this short and ill-acted tragedy for the benefit of the selfish and bigoted Stuarts, suffered death; while others escaped, amongst whom was the titular Earl of Derwentwater, supposed to have been conveyed secretly aboard ship for Scotland.

In these rebellions, it may generally be said, that in the county of Lancaster, Catholics as well as Protestants displayed a firm attachment to the reigning family. Instances of defection were very rare; and, when they occurred, might be imputed to some peculiarity in the situation of the delinquents, rather than to party or religious feelings. The romantic attempt of the young Chevalier, as displayed in this rebellion, had in it something imposing to ardent and enthusiastic minds; and those who embraced his cause south of the Tweed, were principally young

men of warm temperament, whose imaginations were dazzled by the chivalrous character of the enterprise.*

About the close of day, the towers of "proud Preston" were seen rising above the broad sweep of the river, below Penwortham Bridge. The situation chosen by our ancestors for the erection of "*Priests' Town*," — so called because the majority of its inhabitants in former times were ecclesiastics, — evinces the discriminating eye of a priest, and shows that, whether the religious orders selected a site for an abbey or for a city, they were equally felicitous in their choice. Placed at a convenient distance from the sea, upon the elevated banks of one of the finest rivers in England, with a mild climate, and a dry soil, and commanding a rich assemblage of picturesque views, in one of the most interesting portions of Ribblesdale, the spirit of St. Wilfrid himself, to whom the parish church is dedicated, and who was the most accomplished ecclesiastic of his age, must have animated the mind that fixed upon this spot.†

Grimes, adjusting his satchel and other appendages, trudged warily on, according to the directions he had procured from his guides, in respect to lodgings. His route lay up Fishergate; and on his way, near the Town Hall, his progress was interrupted by a dense crowd. The soldiers and local authorities were just conveying a prisoner of some note from the hall of justice to head quarters at the Bull Inn, under a strong guard.

Grimes, impelled by curiosity, and likewise having an idea that it might be one of the rebels, with whom he still connected the disappearance of his daughter, thrust him-

* Vide Baines's Lancashire, vol. i. p. 78. † Ibid. vol. ii. p. 504.

self, edgeways, into the crowd; his primitive appearance causing no slight merriment amongst the bystanders.

Guarded by soldiery and a bevy of constables before and behind, came a tall, muscular figure, attired in a ragged suit—probably a disguise, and not of the most reputable or becoming description. He looked haggard and dejected,—harassed, in all likelihood, by long watching and fatigue. His hair was intensely black, surmounted by a coarse cap, or bonnet, such as the mechanics then wore at their ordinary occupations.

The old man looked steadfastly at the prisoner.

"Surely it cannot be!" said he half aloud. He pressed into the foremost rank, and near enough to receive a lusty blow from one of the constables; but not before he had, with an exclamation of joy and astonishment, recognised the features of his former servant, and dumb inmate at the farm.

Grimes, caring not a whit for the blow, in his ready and imprudent zeal stepped up to the leader of the party, thinking there was doubtless some mistake in the person they had seized, and anxious, too, for an opportunity of speaking with the prisoner anent his errand.

"Stand back!" said the official representative, gruffly.

"Friend, I know thy prisoner well. He was lodged and victualled at my house not six weeks agone."

"The —— he was; then we may as well try a hand with thee too," said the constable.

But the simplicity and openness of the old man was his protection; for the constable walked on, without deigning to bend his truncheon to such low and inglorious enterprise.

"But look thee," said the pertinacious and unsuspect-

ing fisherman, "he is my servant; and you are i' the wrong to capture him without my privity."

"And who art thou?" enquired another of these myrmidons of justice, eyeing Grimes and the cut of his habiliments from head to foot. "I do bethink me thou art i' the roll. Thee would make a grim fixture for a pole here hard by." He looked significantly towards the reward of treason, hung in front of the Town Hall above them.

"Like enough!" said the other, taking the offender by the collar; who, astonished beyond measure, at this proceeding, was unable, for a while, to give such an account of himself as to satisfy the officers, and regain his liberty. The prisoner looked at him, but did not betray the least symptom of acknowledgment.

"Ill-mannered varlet!" thought the old man; "but what can they be a wanting with our Dummy?"

Still urged on by the crowd, he resolved to see an end of the business; so, pushing with them through the gateway of the inn, he came so near the prisoner as to touch him gently by the sleeve, during the press and scuffle in the entry. For a moment,—and it was a glance observed by the fisherman alone,—the pale features of the unfortunate rebel showed a glimpse of recognition; but immediately they relapsed into their former stern, though melancholy expression.

Being much amazed at this conduct, the old man could not forbear exclaiming —

"Varlet!—my daughter—thou——" But the prisoner was out of sight and hearing, and the crowd were driven from the gateway. Grimes heard a few of the bystanders speaking of some great man that was taken, and of the

reward that would be obtained for his apprehension; but the old fisherman smiled at their ignorance. He knew better. It was none other than his dumb retainer at the farm; and he set his wits to work, — no despicable auxiliaries at a pinch, — in order to procure an interview.

In vain he attempted to persuade such of the crowd as would give him a hearing, of the real state of the case, and the great injustice of the man's arrest. But they listened to him with impatience and suspicion. The old man was doubtless either crazed, or guilty as one of the rebel partisans.

"I tell thee what, old crony; if thou dost not change thy quarters, we will lay thee by the heels, i' the cage, presently. Budge! move, quick; or——." Here the speaker, a little authoritative-looking personage, would have made a movement corresponding to the words; but Grimes, perceiving that he was not to be trifled with, unwillingly drew aside, out of harm's way.

Hungry, weary, and dispirited, the old man enquired his way to an obscure lodging, in one of the Wynds near the market. It was a low, dismal-looking tavern, wherein sat two or three unwashed artificers, drinking beer, and devouring the news.

"I'm right fain he 's taken," said one of the politicians, whose black, leathern apron, and smutty face, betokened his occupation. "There 's but old Lovat, they say, now, to chop shorter by a handful of brains. Proud Preston, say I, for ever. Hurra!"

"Ay, and the mayor's wife too, say I; and may she never want a pair of garters to tuck round a rebel's neck!" replied a little giggling, good-humoured fellow, who

seemed to imbibe ale as he drew his breath — both being vitally necessary to his existence.

" She 's a rare wench, and would sooner see a rebel hanged, than bob her nose at a basin of swig and roasted apples."

" She played the husband's part to some purpose, when Charles Edward levied the tribute forsooth, Mr. Mayor being gone to look after his children, by Longridge; but old Sam the beadle says he was afeard o' the wild Highlanders, and slunk out of the way."

Whilst this conversation was going on, Grimes untied his handkerchief, doffed his stocking boots, and embracing his satchel, drew forth a piece of hard, unsavoury cheese, and some barley cake, with which he proceeded to entertain, if not satisfy, his stomach. A glass of beer finished this frugal repast, — when the old man retired into the shadow of a huge projecting chimney, ruminating on the perplexities by which he was encompassed, and on the possibility of his final extrication. Opposite to him in the shadow, as if shunning observation, sat another person, who appeared wishful to avoid any intercourse with the guests. Grimes stretched his gaunt figure on a bench, beside the hearth, as though desirous to let in the dark waters of oblivion upon his spirit.

The hostess was bustling in and out, doubtless impatient at this prolonged stay when the cup was empty; and, in one of these inspectory visits, the old man addressed her, scarcely raising his contemplative gaze from the embers, where he had been poking his eyes out for the last half hour.

" I want a bed for the night, good dame."

"We have none to spare," said the dissatisfied landlady, — "for such guests as thee," perhaps, she would have added, but the stranger from the opposite corner interrupted her.

"He shall have mine: I can lie on the squab."

The voice of the speaker was soft and musical, apparently in a disguised tone.

"You 're very kind, sir," said the hostess; "but this over-thrifty customer may find other guess places i' the town; unless, indeed, he chooses to pay handsomely for the lodging."

"And then, may be," said the stranger, "the siller would find out a bed to lie in."

"I could lend him mine, perhaps," returned the accommodating landlady.

"Then here 's a crown," said the other, "and let the old man be both fed and bedded. I have money enough; and his purse, I think, is not overstocked with provision, if we may guess by the lining of his wallet."

The dame, growing courteous in an instant, promised as good a bed as King George himself slept in that blessed night. The astonished fisherman could hardly credit his senses. He thanked his stars for this unexpected interposition; nor would he refuse the gift, though from the hands of a stranger.

The latter, shortly afterwards, retired to rest; and the political weaver and blacksmith, having settled the hanging, drawing, and quartering of the unfortunate prisoner, not without a full and minute description of this disgusting and barbarous, though to them diverting process, called for a parting cup, to drink confusion to the rebels, and a speedy dismissal to the Chevalier.

Old Grimes retired also; and, in a low wide room, whitewashed and bare-walled, containing a broken chair, two thirds of a table, and a bed without tester, covered with a thick blue quilt, was deposited the mortal fabric of the weary fisherman.

He could not sleep for a considerable time; the strange events he had witnessed, the excitement he had undergone, together with the rude brawls beneath his window, prevented him from closing his eyes until past midnight. He heard not a few loyal home-made songs, by the red-hot braggarts, pot-valiant and full of "gentle minstrelsie," as they trolled lustily past his lodging. Amongst many others, the following seemed an especial favourite: —

1.

"Down wi' the Papists an' a', man,
Down wi' the priest and confession;
Down wi' the Charlies an' a', man,
And up wi' the Duke an' the nation.

2.

"There's Townley, an' Fletcher, an' Syddal,
And Nairn, wi' his breeks wrang side out, man;
Some ran without breeks to their middle,
But Charlie ran fastest about, man."

After a while, the sounds began to mingle, confusedly, with the images floating on his own sensorium. He felt as though unable to separate them: ideal forms took up the real impressions, and arrayed themselves so cunningly withal, that to his mind's eye the image of his daughter seemed to approach. The brawling ceased; the room was lighted up. It was his own chamber, and Katherine sprang towards him, smiling as she was wont, for her usual

"Good night." "God bless thee, my child!" said he, as he threw his arms about her. Starting up, awake, at the sound of his own voice, he found that he had not grasped a shadow; but a being, real and substantial, was in his embrace. Grimes was horribly alarmed.

"Father, it is I," said a soft whisper. It was the voice of his daughter.

"Hush!" said she. "Be silent, for your life and mine. You shall know all; but not now. Fear not for me.—I'm safe; but I will not leave *him*—my companion—yonder unfortunate captive. Help me, and I'll contrive his rescue."

"*Thy* companion, wench! why, how is this? Art ——?"

"Honest and true, as he is faithful. We may yet be happy, as we once were, when this fearful extremity is past. Say no more; we may be overheard. Now aid me; for without our help he is lost! and, oh, refuse not this one, perhaps this last request of thy child!"

She fell upon his neck, and the old man was moved to an unwonted expression of tenderness; for truly his daughter was dearer to him than any earthly object; and still dearer, in the moment when the lost one was restored.

"To-morrow night," said the maiden, "bring your boat, with four stout rowers, to the quay at Preston Marsh. Let me see; ay, the moon is near two days old, and the tide will serve from nine till midnight. You know the channel well, and wait there until I come."

"Kattern, thou shalt go with me. I'll not leave thee now."

"Nay," said the faithful girl, "I must not; I *will* not.

There is a life depending on my endeavours. Father," continued she, throwing her arms round the old man's neck, who now sobbed aloud, "hear me; no power shall force me to leave him now in misery and misfortune. I would move the very stones for his rescue; and cannot I move thee?"

"Well, Kattern, I am a silly, and a weak old body, and thou —. But thou art disguised. Where didst get that coat? and — I declare, — trousers. For shame, wench!"

"Nay, you shall know all, father, when I return; when we have delivered him, and not before."

The old man was too much overjoyed, not to promise the requisite attendance.

"My life depends on 't, father; so good night."

"Stay — stay, wench — a moment!"

But a light step, and the sound of a gently closing door, announced her departure; and Grimes was forced to remain, where he lay sleepless on his pallet, impatiently awaiting daybreak.

With the first peep of dawn, was old Grimes astir; and the lark was but just fluttering from the dew, when the quaint, angular form of the mariner was again seen plodding towards the coast.

"Since that plaguy box came into my fingers, I've had neither rest nor luck. I'll ne'er meddle with stray goods again while I live!" and in this comfortable determination he continued, thinking of his bonny Kattern, to lighten the toil of his long and lonesome journey.

The same day the sun lighted early on the towers and gables of "Proud Preston." Longridge Fell threw off its wreath of mist; but on the river a long and winding vapour followed its course, every thing betokening one

of those pure, exhilarating days, that so rarely visit our watery and weeping regions.

The mayor was but just awakened; yet Mrs. Mayor had long been vigilantly engaged in household and political affairs (for she ruled the civic power in Preston's thrice happy borough), when a stranger came on some business of importance.

"What is your will, my good friend?" enquired the mayoress, taking off a light pair of shagreen-mounted spectacles; for, being of that debateable age, when time is hardly known by his advances on the person, having just mounted these helps occasionally, as she said, when mending a pen, or sewing fine work, she cared not to show that they were in use at other seasons more germane to their purpose.

"I would have a word in private with the mayor."

"Mr. Mayor has no words in private that come not through his lady's ear. Once more, your business?"

"I must see him, and alone," said the intruder.

"*Must* see him," replied the female diplomatist; "I tell you, that you shall not see him, before I am acquainted with the cause. — I hear your master on the floor above," said she to a servant who had just entered; "tell him, he need not hurry down; breakfast is not yet ready."

The servant retired as he was bid; but, having heard more of the foregoing colloquy than his mistress intended, the message, as delivered to his worship, was of an opposite tenour from what he had been charged with. The stranger continued firm in his determination not to divulge his errand; and the anxiety of the ruling power to ascertain his motive would not suffer her to dismiss him.

Great was the disappointment, and dark the storm on the lady's brow, when, beslippered and begowned, came in hastily the chief magistrate of this ancient borough.

"A word in your worship's ear," said the stranger; "my time is short, and the affair is urgent."

"Speak out; my wife shares the burdens of this office, and, indeed ——"

"But, sir, I crave an audience in private. Should you not grant my request, there be other ears shall have the benefit of what is meant for your own."

The magistrate quailed before the terrors of his wife's frown; but, however dangerous the duty — and it was fraught with no ordinary peril — still, in his official capacity, he could not refuse to grant the stranger a private interview.

The mayor was a round, full-eyed personage, whose cheek and nose displayed the result of many a libation to the jolly god. Short-legged, short-breathed, and full-paunched, he strode, quick and laborious, like a big-bellied cask set in motion, as if glad to escape, into a small back chamber, furnished with two stools, a desk, and sundry big books, — implements in use only as touching his private affairs.

"Now, sir," said his majesty's vicegerent, puffing from unwonted exertion, "it is my lot to fill the civic chair in these troublous times; and, truly, my portion is not in pleasant places; but I am loyal, sir, loyal. The king has knighted many a servant less worthy than myself; and, but that Mrs. Mayor is looking forward to the title, there would be little good will to the office from 'my lady,' that is to be. — Now, sir."

The garrulous and ambitious minister of justice here paused, more for lack of breath than words, or will to

utter them; and the stranger, who had hitherto kept his hat just below his chin, waiting for a pause in this monologue, replied, —

"My message respects your prisoner."

"Well, sir, go on. — Proceed, sir, I say. — What! can't you speak? Why stand there as if stricken dumb in our presence?"

The stranger did proceed, the moment that an interval was granted.

"I am brief, your worship."

"Brief — brief — so am I; and my lady, — that is, Mrs. Mayor, though she likes that I should, in some sort, furnish my tongue to an acquaintance with the speech, so that I often speak of and to her as such, you observe, that when it may seem good unto his majesty's pleasure, knighting my poor honesty," — here he made a slight obeisance, — "the words may fall trippingly off the tongue, as though we were used to the title, and wore our honours like they who be born to them, sir. — Proceed, sir; — why stand dilly-dallying here? — am I to wait your pleasure?"

"Mine errand is simply this: — a plot is laid for the escape of your prisoner on his way to London; so that, unless means be taken to hinder it, he will be liberated."

"Escape! — what? — where? We will raise the soldiery. — How say you? — I will tell my lady instantly. — Escape! — If he escape I am undone; my knighthood, — my knighthood, sir, is lost for ever; and my lady — she will ne'er look kindly on me again."

Here the little man arose; and, in great agitation, would have sought counsel from his wife; but the stranger prevented him.

" This must not be; 'tis for your ear alone. — Stay!"

His worship was too much alarmed to resist; and the other led him gently from the door.

" If you will be guided by me, you may prevent this untoward event. Let him be conveyed, with all speed, aboard the king's ship that is in the Irish Channel yonder; so shall you quit your hands of him, and frustrate the plans of his confederates. This must be done secretly, or his friends may get knowledge of the matter, who have had a ship long waiting for him privily, on the coast, to convey him forthwith to Scotland."

" I will about it directly. Dear me, I have left my glasses. The town clerk must be apprised. The jailor — ay, good, — thinkest thou he had not best be committed to jail?"

" Peradventure it will be prudent to do this. I will bear your orders to the town clerk for his removal."

" What, immediately?"

" When your worship thinks best; but I would recommend despatch."

" I will about it instantly. There — there — take this. I shall be at the clerk's office myself shortly. Tell Mr. Clerk to be discreet until I come."

The little twinkling eyes of the functionary were overflowing at the good fortune which revealed, to him alone, this vile Popish treason. Thus happily frustrated by himself, it would, doubtless, be the means of raising him from plebeian ranks to the honours of knighthood, perhaps farther. His head grew dizzy at the prospect. He shook the stranger by the hand; who bowed, and withdrew.

Soon, a little antiquated clerk, with green spectacles,

mounted in huge black rims, and a skin like unto shrivelled parchment, was seen accompanying the stranger to the inn.

The bolts opened to this demi-official, and they were at once ushered into the prisoner's chamber. He had already arisen, and was pacing the apartment in great haste.

"We come, sir," said the clerk, "to announce your removal; but first we search for plots. This rebel's disguise — where, sayest thou, is it concealed?"

"Upon his person," said the stranger.

"Pray doff that noble suit, sir," said the jocose purveyor of justice.

The prisoner, with an angry scowl, in which both grief and astonishment were mingled, silently obeyed the mandate; and displayed, underneath these coarse habiliments, a complete suit of female apparel, — the very clothes worn by Catherine Grimes at the time of her disappearance.

"A well-contrived disguise, sir, truly. I wot you can suddenly change your gender at a pinch," said the clerk, chuckling at his own impertinence. But the prisoner, no longer dumb, as aforetime at the farm, answered, in a voice that awed even this presuming minion, with all the attributes of both law and power at his grasp.

"Why call you me sir, Sir Knave? I own no nicknames, and I answer to none. My title is Derwentwater."

"The titular earl, truly; but now Charles Ratcliffe, since your brother was ——"

"Hanged, thou wouldest say," said the unfortunate and attainted peer, interrupting him; "it was his lot, as

I pray thine may be, when the king shall have his own again. — Silence!" continued he, in a commanding tone, as one accustomed to be obeyed. "I own it was my purpose to escape; but there is treachery in the camp, — treachery in our own bosom, — treachery," — here he cast a keen glance at the stranger — "ay, where our best feelings were cherished. I have leaned on a spear, and it hath pierced me! — deeper than I thought — in this hard and seared heart."

A strong and painful emotion came over his dark features; he clenched his hands; but the stranger betrayed no symptoms of compunction.

"Now, sir, I am ready," said the earl; "make my fetters tight; or, perhaps, I may be spared that indignity."

But the proud Earl of Derwentwater would not stoop to propitiate.

"Nay, bind them, and I will be prouder of their insignia than of all the honours, all the trappings, that George Guelph can bestow."

"We have orders merely for your safe keeping in the jail," said the clerk; "to which the proper officers will see you conveyed."

He was accordingly removed to the town jail, then situated to the west of Friargate. This building had been formerly a Franciscan convent of Grey Friars, or Friars Minor, built by Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, son of Henry III., in 1221, to which Robert de Holland, who impeached Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, for high treason, contributed largely, and was buried there. In its original state it was a small collegiate building, with a chapel attached to its quadrangular cloisters. By the mutations

of time, it became the residence of the Breares of Hammerton, in Bowland; next a house of correction, until the prison at the bottom of Church Street was erected, in 1790.

The clerk, being more particular in his enquiries than his worship, addressed the stranger as follows, when their mission was ended: —

"Thou hast given good evidence of this plot, and too full of circumstance and confirmation to be disbelieved. Thy name is Oswald thou sayest, and one of the party who have plotted for his rescue?"

"I have told thee of this before," replied the stranger sullenly.

"What should prompt thee to betray him?"

"The same that prompts thee to minister to the hangman's trade, — gold!"

"Humph!" replied the other, drily, wiping his spectacles; "and what will satisfy your craving?"

"Why, thinkest thou that I deserve not a reward for my loyalty and readiness to reveal this plot? I will to London with the prisoner; the king will not fail to grant me great largess for what this proud lack-land calls my treachery."

"Why an it be a noose mayhap: for my part," continued the greedy and disappointed man of law, "I have touched never a doit of the bounty, though I have got many a sound rating, and am harder worked than a galley slave, without even so much as a 'thank ye' for my pains. The mayor himself, who dreams he shall be knighted, may whistle a duet with 'my lady,' as he calls her, as long as a county precept, or ere his title be forthcoming, though it be only a puff of empty breath. There 's no

luck in being loyal; neither honour nor honesty thrive therein. But 'tis the spoke that's uppermost; and so are we."

"Thinkest thou that I may get no share of the reward for his apprehension?" enquired the avaricious betrayer.

"Yes; Judas's reward, may be, who sold his master," said the indomitable clerk, much diverted by his own talents for tormenting. "Hold,—I bethink me, thou mayest claim the earl's linsey-woolsey gown and petticoats."

A loud laugh proclaimed that he had fully appreciated his own wit; though the stranger made no comments thereon.

"To-night, thou sayest, a boat will be in readiness, one hour before midnight, and by the mayor's orders?"

"Yes; arrangements will be made, and soon after daylight we shall have our prisoner safe aboard the king's cruiser," replied the stranger, "for I know her bearing to a league."

"Thou wilt with us then?"

"Why, ay, if they will grant me a free passage. I would fain see him safe at head-quarters."

"I know not but thou art right; though, rest thee satisfied, he shall be sufficiently guarded."

The worthies here separated — one to his indictments and his desk, the other to gloat on the mischief he had either committed or prevented.

About an hour before midnight, a heavy jarring sound announced to the prisoner that the time was at hand for his departure.

"Quick—quick, sir," said the jailor; "the mayor and his posse will see you safe aboard."

"The mayor! Wherefore comes he to swell the procession?"

"A prisoner of your rank and influence must be well looked after, I guess. The mayor will see you safely afloat, sir, and then he may go home with a quiet heart. He has had sore misgivings on account of your safety."

The earl accompanied his keeper; a close carriage was at the gate, well guarded. Mr. Mayor, and his green-eyed clerk, took their seats with the prisoner; and the heavy vehicle rumbled dismally through the now deserted streets, wakening many a drowsy burgher as it passed.

They gained the low landing-place without interruption, having taken the precaution to chain the legs and wrists of their prisoner to prevent escape. The mayor and his shadow, the gossiping clerk, stepped out first, the carriage being well guarded on each side. Conducted along a jet, or wooden pier, they saw a fishing-boat lying beneath. The waves flapped heavily on her sides, beating to and fro against the pier. Four rowers were leaning silently on their oars, awaiting the arrival of their cargo: their dark, low-crowned hats heaving above the dim light, which yet lay upon the water.

The wind howled in the rising sail, and the creaking cordage whistled through the block. The sail was hoisted. The wind was fresh, and the rowers raised their oars. The earl was lifted into the boat by two of the attendants. The jailor next stepped in; three other myrmidons of justice followed.

"You know the offing well, my lads, I guess?" said the jailor.

"Ay, ay, sir," replied several voices.

"Where is the king's cutter?" said he, addressing the stranger who was already in the boat.

"Lying to, between us and the Peel of Fouldrey," replied he.

"This is a strange boat, I think," said the inquisitive jailor.

"We came with fish to market from Church Town," was the reply.

"One of your own men engaged her," said the stranger; "and these have grumbled long and hard enough, that they should have the ill-luck to be pressed into this disagreeable service."

"I would you had laid your paws on some other boat. We shall ha' na' luck after this," said the elder of the seamen. "You may hire another now, and welcome."

But there were none at hand. The jailor, with a hearty curse at his insolence, bade him be silent, and push off.

"Hast thou gotten the memorial, touching my poor services to the king?" enquired the trenchant mayor.

"Have ye gotten the warrant safe, and the prisoner in close custody?" enquired the clerk.

But the boat pushed from shore, and the answer was scarce heard, mingling with the rush of the waves and the hollow wind, while the trampling of horses, and the rumbling of the coach, announced the departure of Preston's high and illustrious ruler, and his learned clerk;—one to dream of swords, knights, and drawing-rooms; the other, to soar through those mystic regions, sublime and incomprehensible, the awful, inscrutable forms, fictions, and subtilties of law.

The boat soon gained the mid channel. The wind was

favourable, and the tide beginning to return, swept them rapidly down the river. The stranger, at whose instigation this plan had been adopted, lay in the little cabin, or rather coop, wrapped in a fisherman's coat, apparently asleep. Derwentwater sought not repose: he sat, moody and silent, in a deep reverie, unconscious or insensible to all, but his own dark and untoward fate.

The loud dash and furrowing of the wave, the roar of the wind, and the cry of the boatman as he gave the soundings, were often the only audible sounds. No one was inclined to converse, and the roll and pitching of the boat, when they approached the river's mouth, made the jailor and his friends still less willing to disturb their comrades.

After nearly four hours, the lights of the little fishing hamlet of Lytham were passed, and they were fast entering upon the open sea. The stranger came out of the cabin, stationing himself by the steersman. They were evidently on the look-out for signals. It was not yet day-break, and the wind was from the north, a bitter and a biting air, that made the jailor's teeth to chatter, as he raised himself up to examine their course and situation, as well as the darkness would permit.

"How long run we on through these great blubbering waves, ere we end our voyage? This night wind is worse than a Robin Hood's thaw."

"We will hoist signals shortly," was the reply; "if the ship is within sight, she will answer, and bring to."

"Have ye any prog aboard?" enquired the officer.

A bottle was handed to him. He drunk eagerly of the liquor, and gave the remainder to his assistants.

"I wish, with all my heart," said he, "the prisoner

were safe out of my custody, and I on my way back. I had as lief trot a hundred miles on land, bare back, as sit in this confounded swing for a minute. How my head reels!"

He leaned against one of the benches, to all appearance squeamish and indisposed.

A faint light now flickered on the horizon, and disappeared.—Again.—It seemed to rise above the deep. They were evidently approaching towards it, and the stranger spoke something in a low tone to the steersman.

"Yonder it be, I reckon," said the jailor, lifting up his head, on hearing an unusual bustle amongst the crew. "I am fain to see it, for I am waundy qualmish, dancing to this up-an'-down tune, wi' nought but the wind for my fiddle."

"And who pays the piper?" asked a wavering voice from below.

"Thee, Simon Catterall, bumbailiff, catchpole, thief-taker, and"——

Here a sudden lurch threw the jailor on his beam-ends. A pause was the result, which this worthy official was not inclined to interrupt.

A light, hitherto concealed, was now hoisted up to the mast head. This was apparently answered by another signal, at no great distance.

"Friends!" said the stranger; "and now hold on to your course."

They had passed the banks, and were some leagues from shore. Morning was feebly dawning behind them, when the dark hull of a ship, rapidly enlarging, seemed to rise out, broad, and distinct, from the thin mist towards the west. The loud and incessant moan of the waves,

the dash and recoil of their huge tops, breaking against the sides of the vessel, with voices from on board, were distinctly heard, and immediately the boat was alongside.

The transfer of their cargo was a work of more difficulty, partly owing to the clumsiness and unseamanlike proceedings of the men who had charge of the prisoner, and partly owing to the light being yet too feeble for objects to be distinctly seen. A considerable interval, in consequence, elapsed, ere the jailor, his assistants, and their charge, were hoisted on the deck, not of a trim, gallant war-ship, well garrisoned and appointed, but of a lubberly trading vessel, redolent of tar, grease, and fish odours, bound for merry Scotland.

"Yoh-o-ih! There — helm down — back maintopsail. So, masters, we had nigh slipped hawser, and away. Why here have we been beating about and about, for three long nights; by day we durst not be seen in shore. Yon cruiser overhauls every thing, from a crab to a crab-louse. What! got part of your company in the gyves! Where is the earl?"

"Here!" said the prisoner, coolly.

"Hold, captain," cried the wondering jailor, "the vessel goes not on her voyage until I, and two of my friends here, depart with the boat; we go not further with our prisoner. The remaining two will suffice to see him delivered up at head-quarters. Yet — this cannot be." Here the bewildered officer looked round. "I have a warrant to commit this rebel unto the safe keeping of — ay, the captain of his majesty's cutter, the Dart. But this," surveying the deck with a suspicious glance, "is as frowsy and fusty a piece of ship-timber as ever stowed coals and cod's tails between her hatches. I pray we be

not nabbed!" said he, in a supplicating tone to his head craftsman.

The prisoner himself seemed as much surprised as any of the group; but the stranger, now addressing him, unravelled the mystery.

"My lord, I am no traitor; though until now labouring under that imputation; but you are amongst friends. Thanks to a woman's wits, we are, despite guards, bolts, and fetters, aboard the vessel which was waiting for us, when you were surprised and seized, unfortunately, as we were trying our escape towards the coast. With the aid of my parent, I have been at last successful. You are now free!" It was Catherine who said this.

She changed her hitherto muffled voice, as she continued:—"Captain, we have nabbed as cunning a jailor as ever took rogue to board in a stone crib. We will trouble thee to use thy craft; undo these fetters, prithee. He must with you, captain, till you can safely leave him and his companions ashore; but use him well, for his vocation's sake.—My lord, through weal and woe I have been your counsellor—your friend; but we must now part,—'tis fitting we should. While you were in jeopardy, that alone could excuse my flight. Should better times come!"—Her voice faltered;—she could not proceed;—and old Grimes drew his hat over his face.

"Father," said Catherine, "you will take me to our home again. I will be all to you, once more; and to my mother, now that *he* is safe."

One kiss from the gallant earl, and the highminded, though lowborn maiden, stepped into the boat. One wave o' the hand, when the morning mist interposed its white veil, and parted them for ever;—yet not before old

Grimes, taking a last survey of the vessel, was quite sure he saw the magician of the casket looking at him over the ship's side. In all probability, his fancy had not deceived him;—the affair of the casket, though supposed by the fisherman to be altogether of a supernatural nature, was, in all likelihood, a means of supplying the earl with money and information to aid his escape.

The subsequent history of this unfortunate, but misguided chieftain, whose daring and audacious bravery was worthy of a better cause, and a more disinterested master, is but too well known.

The vessel, being ill equipped and hardly sea-worthy, was pursued,—the earl taken,—and an ignominious death gave to the world assurance of a traitor.

THE

MAID'S STRATAGEM

THE MAID'S STRATAGEM;

OR,

THE CAPTIVE LOVER.

THE following tale is, perhaps, the most apocryphal in our series. There has been considerable difficulty in fixing its locality; and, indeed, we are hardly sure that the names, dates, and places, we have hit upon, will answer to the facts in every particular. We have done our best to verify it, and have succeeded, we trust, in the attempt, more to our reader's satisfaction than our own.

THE MAID'S STRATAGEM;

OR,

THE CAPTIVE LOVER.

" Let me alone with him. If I do not gull him into a nayword, and make him a common recreation, do not think I have wit enough to lie straight in my bed."

Twelfth Night.

" THERE be more fools than farthingales, and more braggarts than beards, in this good land of ours. A bald-faced

impertinent! it should cost the grand inquisitor a month's hard study to invent a punishment for him. This pretty morsel! Hark thee, wench; I'll render his love-billet to thine ear. Listen and be discreet.

"'If my sighs could waft the soft cargo of their love to thy bosom, I would freight the vessel with my tears, and her sails should be zephyrs' wings, and her oars love's fiercest darts. If I could tell but the lightest part of mine agony, your heart, though it were adamant, would melt in the furnace of my speech, and your torture should not abate till one kind glance had irradiated the bosom of your most unhappy, and most wretched of lovers,

'ANTONIO.'

"Now for the *post scriptum*. If thy sighs be as long as thine ears, —— help the furnace they are blown through. Again,

"'If one ray of compassion lurks in your bosom, lady, let those radiant fingers illuminate your pen, touching one little word by way of answer to this love-billet, though it were but as a rope thrown out in this overwhelming ocean of love, to keep from sinking your unhappy slave. These from my dwelling at ——.'

"O' my troth, answer thou shalt have, and that quickly, on thy fool's pate. Dost' think, Marian, it were not a deed worth trying, to quell this noisome brute with a tough cudgel?"

"It were too good for him," replied the maid; "but if you will trust the rather to my conceits, lady, we will make this buzzard spin. He shall dance so rare a coarnto for our pastime; beshrew me, but I would not miss the sport for my best holiday favours."

But we leave the beauteous Kate and her mischief-

loving maiden, to plot and machinate against the unsuspecting lover. It behoveth us, moreover, to be absent for a somewhat grave and weighty reason, to wit, that when women are a plotting, another and a more renowned personage,—the *beau ideal* of whose dress and personal appearance, according to the testimony of a reverend divine, consists of a black coat and blue breeches,—generally contrives to be present, as was by that learned dignitary umquhile set forth in a well-known ditty, of which the veracity is only equalled by the elegance and propriety of the subject, and the classical dignity of its composition.

Leaving them, though in somewhat dangerous company, we just glance at the lover, whose epistle to the proud maiden proved so galling to her humours.

Master Anthony Hardcastle was the only son of a substantial yeoman of good repute long resident in ———. Dying, he left him, when scarcely at man's estate, the benefit of a good name, besides a rich store of substance, in the shape of broad pieces, together with lands and livings. The sudden acquisition of so much loose wealth, to one whose utmost limit of spending-money aforetime had been a penny at Easter and a groat at Michaelmas, did seem like the first breaking forth of a mighty torrent, pent up for past ages, forming its own wild and wilful channel, in depite of all bounds and impediments. His education had been none of the most liberal or extensive; and, astonished at his own aggrandisement, he found himself at once elevated into an object of importance, ere he could estimate his own relative insignificance in the great world around him. Thus he became an easy prey to the hordes of idlers and braggarts with whom he associated. He had

been to town, kept company with some of the leading cut-and-thrust bullies of the day; but Nature had denied him the headstrong boldness, the desperate recklessnes of disposition, requisite for this amiable occupation. His infirmity had consequently often led him to play the coward. At the same time it probably was the means of restraining him from many of those evils into which his lavish and simple disposition might have been enticed, and he was now settling down quietly in the character of a good-natured, well-furnished simpleton. Fond of dress and a gaudy outside, he aimed at ladies' hearts through the medium of silken cloaks, and ponderous shoe-buckles;—designing to conquer not a few of the fair dames with whom he associated. But, alas! the perversity of woman had hitherto rendered his efforts unavailing; still an overweening opinion of his own pretensions to their favour, prevented him from giving up the pursuit, every succeeding mishap in no wise hindering him from following the allurements of the next fair object that fluttered across his path. He had heard of the wit and beauty of Kate Anderton, only daughter to Justice Anderton of Lostock Hall, a bluff and honest squire, who spent his mornings in the chase, and his evenings in the revel incident thereto. A man well looked upon by his less distinguished neighbours, being of a benevolent disposition, and much given to hospitality. Kate's disposition was fiery and impetuous, but tempered withal so pleasantly by the sweetness of a naturally tender and affectionate spirit, that you loved her the better for these sharp and wayward ingredients, which prevented that sweetness from cloying.

Master Anthony, hearing of this goodly maiden, found

himself, after secretly beholding her, moved to the exploit of winning, and wearing in his bosom so precious a gem, which many a high-flown gallant had essayed to appropriate. He began the siege by consulting the most approved oracles and authorities of the time, for the construction of love-billets. The cut and fashion of the paper, too, were matters of deep and anxious consideration. Folded and perfumed, the missile was despatched, and the result was such as we have just seen.

Upon this memorable day, it then drawing on towards eventide, Anthony, full of solicitude, and musing on the fate of his billet, was spreading himself out, like a newly feathered peacock, in the trim garden behind his dwelling. A richly embroidered Genoa silk waistcoat, and amber-coloured velvet coat, glittered in the declining sun, like the church weathercock, perched just above him at a short distance from the house.

The mansion of Squire Anderton lay a few miles off; yet there had been sufficient time for the return of his trusty valet, who was the bearer of this love-billet. Several times had he paced the long straight gravel walk stretching from the terrace to the Chinese temple, and as often had he mounted the terrace itself, to look out for the well-known figure of Hodge, ere the hind was descried, through a cloud of hot dust, urging on his steed to the extremity of a short but laborious trot. Needless were it to dwell upon the anxiety and foreboding with which he awaited the nearer approach of this leaden-heeled Mercury. To lovers the detail would be unnecessary, and to others description would fail to convey our meaning.

"I ha 't, measter."

"What hast thou brought, Hodge?"

"A letter!"

"Quick—quick, fellow. Canst not give it me?"

"Ay, i' fackens; but where is it?"

Great was the consternation depicted in the flat and vapid face of the boor, as he fumbled in his pocket, turned out the lining, and groped down, incontinently, "five fathom deep," into his nether appendages; but still no letter was forthcoming.

"She gi'ed me one, though; an' where it is —— I'se sure it waur here, an' —— Bodikins if those de'ilments hanna twitched it out o' my —— Thoose gigglin' wenches i' th' buttery took it, when I waur but putting my nose to the mug the last time, for a lift i' the stirrup."

Terrible was the wrath and disapprobation evinced by Master Anthony at this disaster. He had nigh despoiled the curls of his new wig, which were become twisted and awry with choler.

Patiently to endure was the business of Hodge; and, his master's fury having "sweeled" down into the socket, a few hasty flashes just glimmered out from the ignited mass, ere it was extinguished.

"But thou hadst a letter,—dolt—ass!"

"Ay, master, as sure as I am virtuous and well-favoured."

"Then is the lady kindly affected towards my suit? But oh, thou gull—thou dunderpate—thou losel knave, to lose one line moved by her sweet fingers. Get in;—I'll not defile my rapier with beating of thee. Thanks to the lady thou hast just left! her condescension so affecteth my softer nature, that I could not speak an angry word without weeping. March, rascal, and come not into my presence until thou art bidden, lest I make

a thrust at thee with my weapon. Oh! Katherine, my life—my love;—'my polar star, my axle; where all desire, all thought, all passions turn, and have their consequence.'"

Anthony had picked up this scrap from the players, with whom he had smoked, and committed the usual delinquencies, not peculiar to that age of folly and licentiousness.

"I'll go dream of thee, where there be a bank of flowers. Here let me lose myself in a delirium of sweets."

Chusing a fair position, he squatted down upon a ripe strawberry bed, and great was the dismay with which he beheld the entire ruin of his best puce-coloured breeches. So sudden was the dissipation of his complacency, that he determined to beat Hodge forthwith; to which thrifty employment we commend him, whilst we address ourselves to the further development of our story.

Near to the lower extremity of the village, dwelt a maiden, whose bloom had been wasted, and whose matchless hopes were always frustrated ere their accomplishment. Many a simpering look had she cast towards the goodly raiment of Master Anthony, and some incipient notion was entertained, that the indweller at the big house was not averse to a peep, now and then more tender than usual, at the window of Mrs. Bridget Allport. When a boy, Anthony had been a sort of spoiled pet of the maiden, who was then opening into bloom, and the bud of promise breaking forth in all its pride and loveliness. While Anthony's legs were getting rounder, and his face and figure more plump and capacious, the person of Mistress Bridget was, alas! proceeding, unluckily, in a manner quite the reverse. Anthony's love had not quickened

into fruition with his growth; but the lady kept a quick and wary eye upon his movements, and many a pang had his flattering favours caused in her too susceptible heart.

Distantly related to the family, she sometimes visited Lostock Hall; and, at the period when our narrative begins, she was located therein.

Kate had long been aware of her likings and mishaps, and was no stranger to her predilection for Master Anthony Hardcastle.

The first overt act of mischief resulting from the plots of Kate and her maid, was a smart tap at the door of Mistress Bridget, her bedchamber, where she was indulging in reverie and romance; but the day being hot, she had fallen asleep, and was dreaming of "hearts, darts, and love's fires." She started from this mockery of bliss at the summons.

"Prithee, Marian, what is it?"

"A billet from—I don't care to tell who!"

"A billet, sayest thou?—eh!—who can it be? What! It is— Go away, my good Marian; I cannot— Oh! when will my poor heart— "*Waft a cargo of love to thy bosom.*' '*Melt in the furnace.*' Dear delightful passion! How pure! Just like mine own, I declare. '*Harder than adamant.*' Nay, thou wrongest me. Prithee, Marian, who—where is he?"

"A trusty messenger is below." She dropped a handsome courtesy.

"Give me my tablets and my writing stool. Oh, Marian, little did I think of this yesterday. When I was telling thee of—of— Oh, I am distraught."

She commenced a score of times, ere something in the shape of a communication could be despatched.

"There—there; let it be conveyed quick. Nay, I will see him myself. Lead me to him, girl, I will say how—and yet, this may look too bold and unmaidenly. Take it good girl, and say—what thou thinkest best."

Lightly did the laughing maiden trip through the great hall into the buttery, where Hodge was ambushed, along with a huge pye, fast lessening under his inspection. Her intention was not to have given him the billet, but she was suddenly alarmed at the approach of Mistress Bridget. Fearful lest the deception might be discovered, she hastily gave Hodge the precious deposit, trusting to some favourable opportunity when she might extract the letter from his pouch. An occasion shortly occurred, and Hodge was despatched, as we have seen, billetless, and unconscious of his loss.

The lover was sore puzzled how to proceed. It was possible, nay more than probable, that the message might have appointed a meeting; or twenty other matters, which he was utterly unable to conjecture, woman's brain being so fertile in expedients; and if he obeyed not her injunctions it might be construed amiss, and unavoidably prove detrimental to his suit. Should he send back the messenger? She would perhaps laugh at him for his pains; and he was too much afraid of her caprice, to peril his adventure on this issue. A happy thought crossed his brain; he capered about his little chamber, and could hardly govern himself as the brilliant conception blazed forth on his imagination. This bright phantasy was to be embodied in the shape of a serenade. It would be more in the romantic way of making love,—would stimulate her passion,—powerfully enlist her feelings in his favour, and, doubtless, bring on

something like an appointment, or a permission at any rate, to use a freer intercourse.

"To-morrow night," said he, rubbing his hands, and stroking his soft round chin, for be it understood, gentle reader, the youth was of a tender and fair complexion, with little beard, save a slight blush on his upper lip. He was not ill-favoured, but there was, altogether, something boyish and effeminate throughout his appearance, which seemed not of the hue to win a lady's love. He could twang the guitar, and had at times, made scraps of verse, which he trolled to many a damsel's ear, but, to little purpose hitherto.

On the morrow, he watched the sun creep lazily up the sky, and more lazily down again. The old dial seemed equally dilatory and unwilling to move. He had sorted out his best and most ardent love sonnet, and strummed as many jangling tunes as would have served a company of morris-dancers and pipers for a May festival. Twilight came on apace. The moon was fast mounting to her zenith. No chance of its being dark; so much the better, it would enable the lovers to distinguish each other more easily.

Hodge had long been ready, and the steeds duly caparisoned. At length, reckoning that his arrival would take place about the time the lady had retired to her chamber, he set forth, accompanied by his trusty esquire. The road lay, for some distance, over a long high tract of moorland, while beautifully did the bright stars appear to shoot up from the black, bleak, level horizon. The moon seemed to smile auspiciously upon them, and even Hodge grew eloquent beneath her glance.

"It's brave riding to-night, master; one might see to

pick up a tester, if 'twere but i' the way. Well, I does like moonlight, ever since Margery came a living at the parson's."

"Peace, sirrah!" Anthony was conning inwardly, and humming the soft ditty by which he proposed to excite his mistress' ear. "I think thou art mine evil destiny, doomed everlastingly to be my plague and annoyance."

"Body o' me, but you're grown woundily humoursome of a sudden," muttered the other at the lower end of his voice. "I waur but saying as how, Margery" ——

Hodge here received another interruption. A stray ass, turned out to browse on the common, seemingly actuated thereto by sympathy or proximity of either man or beast, burst into one of those hysterical, though exquisite cadences, which defy all imitation, and, at the same time, produce an extraordinary and irresistible effect on the animal economy.

"That is all along of thy prating," said the meditative lover, when the "*strain*" was concluded. "It bodes no good; and I'd as lief see a magpie, and hear a screech-owl, as one of those silly beasts. The salutation of an ass, by night, is ever held a sound of ill omen; and lo, there be two of ye, reckoning thine own ugly voice."

"Then may two bode good, if one bode ill, as the maids say of the magpies," replied the indefatigable attendant.

"I'll cudgel thine infirmity out o' thee. Hold thy tongue! Hadst thou not been left me by my father, a precious bequest, I had sent thee a packing, long ere thou hadst worn a badge in my service."

The rest of their journey was accomplished in comparative silence, until a short ascent brought them to a steep ridge, down which the road wound into the valley.

It was a scene of rich and varied beauty, now lighted by a bright summer moon. A narrow thread of light might be seen, twining through the ground below them, broken at short intervals, then abruptly gliding into the mist which hung upon the horizon. Lights were yet twinkling about, where toil or festivity held on their career unmitigated. A mile or two beyond the hill they were now preparing to descend, lay a dark wood extending to the shallow margin of the adjacent brook; above this rose the square low tower of Lostock Hall: clusters of long chimneys, irregularly marked out in the broad moonlight, showed one curl of smoke only, just perceptible above the dark trees, intimating that some of the indwellers were yet awake. Ere long, a by-path brought them round to a fence of low brushwood, where a little wicket communicated with the gardens and offices behind.

"Here stay with the beasts, until I return," said Anthony, deliberately untying the cover wherein reposed his musical accompaniment.

"And how long may we kick our heels, and snuff the hungry wind for supper, master?"

"Until my business be accomplished," was the reply.

Master Anthony commenced tuning, which aroused the enquiries of several well-ordered and decently disposed rooks, who were not given to disturb their neighbours at untimely hours, and were just at the soundest part of their night's nap.

"These villainous bipeds do fearfully exorbitate mine ear," said the agonised musician. "'Tis not in the power of aught human to harmonise the strings."

The clamour increased with every effort, until the whole community were in an uproar; driving the incensed wooer

fairly off the field. Trusting that he should be able to eke out the tune, in spite of these interruptions, he hastened immediately to his destination. He crossed a narrow bridge, and passed through a gap into the garden, taking his station on one side of the house, where he commenced a low prelude, by way of ascertaining if the lady were within hearing, and likewise the situation of her chamber. To his inexpressible delight, a window, nearly opposite the tree under which he stood, was gently opened, and he could distinguish a figure in white moving gently behind the drapery. He now determined to try the full power of his instrument; and warbled, with no inconsiderable share of skill and pathos, the following ditty:—

" Fair as the moon-beam,
Bright as the running stream,
Sparkling, yet cold;
In Love's tiny fingers
A shaft yet there lingers,
And he creeps to thy bosom, and smiles, lady.
Soon his soft wings will cherish
A flame round thine heart,
And, 'ere it may perish,
Thy peace shall depart.

O listen, listen, lady gay;
Love doth not always sue;
The brightest flame will oft decay,
The fondest lover rue, lady!
The fondest lover rue, lady!"

At the conclusion he saw a hand, presently an arm, stretched out through the casement. Something fell from it, which glistened with a snowy whiteness in the clear moonlight. He ran to seize the treasure — a scrap of paper neatly folded—which, after a thankful and

comely obeisance towards the window, he deposited in his bosom. The casement was suddenly closed. The lover, eager to read his billet, made all imaginable haste to regain the road, where mounting his steed, he arrived in a brief space, almost breathless with anticipation and impatience, at his own door. The contents of the despatch were quickly revealed, in manner following:—

"I know thine impatience; but faith must have its test. Send a message to my father; win his consent to thy suit; but as thou holdest my favour in thine esteem, come not near the house thyself ere one month have elapsed. Ask not why; 'tis sufficient that I have willed it. Shouldst thou not obey, I renounce thee for ever.

This shall be the test of thy fidelity.

KATHERINE."

He kissed the writing again and again: he skipped round the chamber like unto one demented; and when the old housekeeper, who was in a sore ill temper at being deprived of her accustomed allowance of rest, came in, to know his intentions about supper, he bade her go dream of love, and give supper to the hogs.

The morning found Anthony early at his studies. A letter, painfully elaborated, was despatched in due form "To Master Roger Anderton, these;" and the lover began to ruminate on his good fortune. The terms were hard, to be sure, and the time was long; but women, and other like superior intelligences, will not bear to be thwarted; at least, so thought Master Anthony Hardcastle, as he threw his taper legs over the opposite chair, screwing his forbearance to the test.

The same day an answer was received, briefly as follows: —

"Though thy person and qualifications be unknown to me, yet have I not been ignorant of the respect and esteem which thy father enjoyed. Shouldst thou win my daughter's favour, thou shalt not lack my consent, if thou art as deserving as he whose substance thou hast inherited."

Leaving to Anthony the irksome task of minuting down the roll of time for one unlucky month, turn we to another personage, with whom it is high time the reader should be acquainted. At Turton Tower, a few miles distant, dwelt a cavalier of high birth, whose pedigree was somewhat longer than his rent-roll. To this proud patrician Kate's father had long borne a bitter grudge, arising out of some sporting quarrel, and omitted no opportunity by which to manifest his resentment. Dying recently, he had left an only son, then upon his travels, heir to the inheritance, and the feud with Anderton.

Shortly after his return, Kate, being on a visit in the neighbourhood, saw him; and as nothing is more likely to excite love than the beholding of some forbidden object, unwittingly, in the first instance, she began to sigh, and with each sigh came such a warm gush of feeling from the heart, as did not fail to create a crowd of sensations altogether new and unaccountable. On his part, the feeling was not less ardent, though less inexplicable, at least to himself, and a few more glances fixed them desperately and unalterably in love. Hopeless though it might be, yet did the lovers find a sad and mournful solace in their regrets, the only sentiment they could indulge. They

had met, and in vows of secresy had often pledged unintermitting attachment.

Love at times had prompted some stratagem to accomplish their union, for which the capricious and unforgiving disposition of the old gentleman seemed to afford a fair excuse. It is a most ingenious and subtle equivocator that same idle boy, and hath ever at hand palliatives, and even justifications, in respect to all crimes done and committed for the aiding and comforting of his sworn lieges. And thus it fell out, Kate's wits were now at work to make Anthony's suit in some way or another subservient to this object. Once committed to a purpose of such duplicity, no wonder that contrivances and plots not altogether justifiable should ensue; and Kate's natural archness and vivacity, coupled with the mischievous temper of her maid, gave their proceedings a more ludicrous character than the dignity of the passion would otherwise have allowed.

The month was nigh spent, when Hodge, one morning, entered the chamber of his master, who sat there dribbling away the time over a treatise on archery.

"How now, sirrah?"

"Please ye, master, Mistress Kate is to be wed on the feast of St. Crispin; an' I 'm a thinking I 've no body-gear fitting for my occupation."

"Married, sayest thou? — to whom?"

"Nay, master, an' ye know not, more's the pity if it be not to your honour."

"To me, sayest thou?"

"They ha' so settled it, belike; and I thought, if it would please ye, to order me new boots and a coat for the wedding."

"Peace! — where gattest thou the news?"

"At the smithy. I was but just getting the mare shoed, and a tooth hammered into the garden rake."

"It is wondrous strange!" replied Anthony, musing; "but women are of a subtle and unsearchable temper. She did appoint me a month's abstinence. Sure enough, the feast thou hast named happeneth on the very day of my release. She hath devised this plot for my surprise! Excellent! and so the rumour hath gotten abroad? Now, o' my troth, but I like her the better for 't. Go to; a new suit, with yellow trimmings, and hose of the like colour, shall be thine: thou shalt be chief servitor, too, at my wedding."

Anthony seemed raving wild with delight. He resolved that the jade should know of his intelligence, and he would attack the citadel by a counterplot of a most rare and excellent device. To this end he resolved on going to the hall the night preceding his appointment; in the mean time diligently maturing his scheme for the surprise and delight of the cunning maiden.

With the evening of an unusually long and tedious day, whose minutes had been spun to hours, and these hours into ages, did Master Anthony Hardcastle, accompanied by his servant, set forth on this perilous exploit. Upon a rich and comely suit, consisting of a light blue embroidered vest, and a rich coat of peach-coloured velvet, with bag-wig and ruffles, was thrown a dark cloak, partly intended as a disguise, and partly to screen his gay habiliments from dust and pollution.

They passed slowly on for an hour or two, dropping down to the little wicket as aforetime, above which the crows were again ready with the usual enquiries. The

squire being left with the steeds, Master Anthony once more scrambled over the garden hedge, and sustained his person in a becoming attitude against the pear-tree, whence he had so successfully attacked and carried the citadel on his former visit. He now beheld, with wonder, lights dancing about in the house, frisking and frolicking through the long casements, like so many Jack-o'-lanterns. Indeed, the greater part of the mansion seemed all a blaze, and of an appalling and suspicious brightness. Sounds, moreover, of mirth and revelry approached his ear. He would instantly have proceeded to ascertain the cause of this inauspicious merry-making, had not Kate's injunction kept him aloof. The noise of minstrelsy was now heard, — symptoms of the marriage-feast and the banquet. More than once he suspected some witchery, some delusion of the enemy to beguile him by enchantments. However, he resolved to be quiet; and, for the purpose of a more extended vision, he climbed or rather stepped into the low huge fork of the tree. From this tower of observation he kept a wary eye, more particularly towards the window whence the billet was thrown, expecting to behold some token of his mistress's presence. But this chamber seemed to be the dullest and darkest in the whole house; not a ray was visible. It seemed shut out, impervious to the gladness which irradiated the bosom of its neighbours.

A white cur now came snarling about the bushes; then, cautiously smelling his way to the tree, suddenly set up a yell, so deafening and continuous, that he roused some of the revellers within. Two men staggered from the house, evidently a little the worse in their articulation by reason of the potations they had taken.

"Quiet, Vick! — Hang thy neck, what 's a matter? Eh! the pear-tree? — It 's the thief again — and before the fruit 's ripe. — Bodikins! but we 'll catch thee now, 'r lady. We 'll have a thong out of his hide; split me if we ha' n't!"

The men approached as cautiously as their condition would permit; while Anthony, overhearing the latter part of their dialogue, sat somewhat insecurely on his perch.

"Dan, get th' big cudgel out o' t' barn. I see a some'at black like, an' fearsome, i' th' tree."

Probably they had imbibed courage with their liquor, otherwise the black "somewhat" in the tree might have indisposed them for this daring attack.

"I 'll have a blow at it, be 't mon or devil, hang me."

Anthony pulled his cloak tightly about him; and while the weapon was providing, he entertained serious thoughts of surrendering at discretion; but the effect which this premature disclosure might have on his mistress's determination towards him, retarded the discovery; and he was not without hope of eluding the drunken valour of the brutes.

"Now gie 't me, Dan. — Tol de rol. —

"'An' back and sides go bare, go bare.'"

Approaching to the attack, Barnaby brandished his cudgel to the time and tune of this celebrated alehouse ditty. The concluding flourish brought the weapon waving within a very concise distance of the goodly person of Master Anthony Hardcastle.

"Murder! — Villains!" cried the terrified lover, unable to endure the menacing aspect of this fearful in-

vader; "I 'm Master Anthony, ye sots, ye unthrifts — your master, is to be; and I — I 'll have ye i' the stocks for this."

"Bodikins and blunderkins! hear'st him, Dan? Why, thou lying lackpenny, I 'll soon whack the corruption out o' thee. Master Anthony, indeed! he be another guess sort of thing to thee, I trow. Thee be'st hankering after the good things hereabout; but I 'll spoil thy liquorish tooth for tasting. — Come, unkennel, vermin!"

"I am Master Anthony, friend, as safe as my mother bore me. If thou lackest knowledge, go ask Hodge with the horses at the back gate."

"Then what be'st thou for i' the pear-tree? — Na, na; Master Anthony is gone home a great whiles back. He 's to marry young mistress i' the morn, an' we 're getting drunk by participation. — There 's for thee; I talks like ou'd Daniel the schoolmaster."

Sorely discomposed with the infliction of this vile contumely, Anthony was forced to descend. Nothing, however, would convince the clowns of their mistake. He showed them his glossy raiment; but their intellects were too confused for so nice a discrimination; they consequently resolved to hold him in durance until the morrow, when their master would bring him to account for this invasion of his territory. But who shall depict the horror and consternation of the unhappy lover, on finding them seriously bent on his incarceration in a filthy den, used heretofore as a receptacle for scraps and lumber, near the stables. Remonstrance, entreaty, threats, solicitations, were equally unavailing. He demanded an audience with the justice.

Thee 'll get it soon enough, I warrant thee. And

thee may think well o' the stocks; but th' pillory is no more than I 'll be bound for. The last we catched, Jem Sludge, we belaboured in such fashion, as I verily think he waur more like a middin' nor a man when he got his neck out o' th' collar. — Come along, — it 's not to th' gallows, this bout, my pretty bird. — Lend him a whack behind, Dan, if he do not mend his pace."

A rude blow was here administered to the unfortunate captive. He cried out lustily for help; but the enquirers from the hall made merry at his captivity, rejoicing that the thief was now safely in the trap.

On the following morning, the eventful day of his daughter's bridal, the justice rose earlier than he was wont. His features wore a tinge of anxiety, as he paced the room with sharp and irregular footsteps. Suddenly he was disturbed by approaching voices, and a sort of suppressed bustle along the passage. On opening the door, he saw Daniel and his doughty companion, Barnaby, whose red eyes and hollow cheeks betokened their too familiar indulgence in past festivities.

" We 've catched him at last, master."

" Who? — What dost stand agape for?"

" Why — a rogue 'at was robbing the gardens."

" A murrain light on both of ye! — I cannot be chafed with such like matters now."

" But, your worship," cautiously spake Dan, " he be the most comical thing you ever clapped eyes on. He says he be Master Anthony, your worship's new son that is to be to-day."

" How sayest thou? — I think thy wits are the worse for bibbing o' yesternight."

" Nay, your worship's grace, but we 'll e'en fetch him.

He 's pranked out gaily; and a gay bird he be for your honour's cage."

Two or three domestics now entered, leading in their prisoner. His woe-begone looks were angrily bent on his conductors. He shook off their grasp, approaching the owner of the mansion where he had been so evil-entreated. His hair, released from its bonds, dangled in primeval disorder above his shoulders. His goodly raiment, no longer hidden, was rumpled and soiled, like the finery of a stage wardrobe. Indeed, the Squire guessed he was one of the village players, that had been foraging for his supper after a scanty benefit.

"How now, braggart? — What evil occupation brings thee about my house? — What unlucky hankering, sirrah, brings thee, I say, a robbing of my grounds and poultry-yards? Methinks thou hast but a sorry employment for thy gingerbread coat."

"I came, sir, to wed your daughter," replied Anthony, simpering, and with great modesty.

"My daughter!" cried Anderton, in a voice of thunder; "and pray may I enquire to whom I am beholden for this favour?"

"To Master Anthony Hardcastle," said the lover, drawing himself up proudly, and casting a glance of triumph and defiance at his tormentors.

"Whew!" cried the other; "why, Master Anthony is no more like thee, thou tod-pate, than thou to St. George, or the dragon of Wantley. — A rare device, truly, — a cunning plot, — a stage-trick to set the mob agape! — Why, thou puny-legged Tamburlane — thou ghost of an Alexander! — how darest thou confront me thus? — Now, i' lady, but I've a month's mind to belabour the truth out

o' thee with a weapon something tough and crabbed i' the tasting."

Anthony's face lengthened inordinately at this unexpected rebuke, and a latent whimper quivered about the corners of his pale and pursy mouth. Sobs and protestations were useless; there seemed a base conspiracy to rob him even of his name and identity. He vowed, that the period of his proscription being past, Kate was hourly expecting him, and his appearance overnight was but to execute a little stratagem for her surprise. This explanation but served to aggravate; and in vain did he solicit an interview with the lady, promising to abide by her decision.

"Why, look thee," said the justice; "Anthony Hardcastle, whom thy lying tongue and figure most wofully defame, hath been our guest oftentimes during the past month, and truly his gallant bearing and disposition have well won my consent. No marvel at my daughter's love! — But thou! — had she stooped from her high bearing to such carrion, I 'd have wrung your necks round with less compunction than those of two base-bred kestrils."

Anthony was dumb with astonishment. The whole transaction had the aspect of some indistinct and troubled dream, or rather some delusion of the arch enemy, to entangle and perplex him. At this moment tripped in the pert maiden, whose share in the machinations we before intimated. She looked on the bewildered lover with a sly and equivocal glance. Craving permission to speak, she said, —

"'Tis even so, your worship; this interloper is none

other than the very person he represents; and here come those who will give the riddle its proper answer."

Immediately came in the blushing Kate, led in by a tall and comely gentleman, whom her father recognised as the real Anthony.

"We come but to crave your blessing," said this personage, bending gracefully on his knee, whilst Kate seized the hand of her parent.

"Forgive this deceit!" she looked imploringly at the old man, who seemed too astonished to reply. "It was but to win my father's knowledge and esteem for the man to whom my vows are for ever plighted."

"Nay, start not," said the bridegroom; "I but borrowed this ill-used gentleman's name, as I knew none other mode of access to your presence than the disguise that his *suit* afforded; and from him I now crave forgiveness."

"And I knew," said Kate glancing round towards the real Anthony, "that the man of my choice would be yours, could I but contrive you should hold a fair judgment between them, as you now do this day."

A reconciliation was the result; but, ere a "little month was old," were seen at the same altar, and with the same object, Master Anthony Hardcastle and Mistress Bridget Allport.

THE

SKULL-HOUSE.

THE SKULL-HOUSE.

WORSLEY, or, as it is sometimes called, Wardley Hall, is an ancient building about seven miles west from Manchester. It was an old seat of the Downes family, and afterwards of Lord Barrymore. A human skull was formerly shown here, beside the staircase, which the occupiers would not permit to be removed. This grim fixture, it was said, being much averse to any change of place or position, never failed to punish the individual severely who should dare to lay hands on it. If removed or buried, it was sure to return, so that in the end each succeeding tenant was fain to endure its presence, rather than be subject to the terrors and annoyances consequent upon its removal. Its place was a square aperture in the wall; nor would it suffer this opening to be glazed, or otherwise filled up, without creating some disturbance. It seemed as if those rayless sockets loved to look abroad, peradventure on the scenes of its former enjoyments and reminiscences. It was almost bleached white by exposure to the weather, and many curious persons have made a pilgrimage there even in late

years. Several young men from Manchester once going on this errand, one of them, unobserved of his fellows, thought he would ascertain the truth of the stories he had heard. For this purpose he privately removed the skull to another situation, and left it to find its way back again. The night but one following, such a storm arose about the house, that many trees were blown down, the roofs were unthatched, and the tenants, finding out the cause, as they supposed, replaced the skull, when these terrific disturbances ceased.

The occurrences detailed more fully in the following pages are usually assigned as the origin of this strange superstition.

THE SKULL-HOUSE.

"That skull had a tongue in 't and could sing once."

Hamlet.

"I WONDER what that hair-brain'd brother of mine can be doing. No fresh brawl, I hope," said Maria Downes to her cousin Eleanor as they sat, mopish and disquieted enough, in a gloomy chamber of the old hall at Worsley.

"I hope not, too," replied Eleanor; — and there was another long and oppressive silence.

It was in the dusk of a chill, damp, November evening. The fire shot forth a sharp uncertain glimmer, and the dim walls threw back the illumination.

"I know not why," said Maria, "but my spirits are very sad, and every thing I see looks mistrustful and foreboding!"

So thought her cousin; but she did not speak. Her heart was too full, and a tear started in her eye.

"Would that Harry had eschew'd the frivolities and dissipations of yonder ungodly city; that he had stayed with us here, in safe and happy seclusion. I have hardly known pleasure since he went."

Eleanor's bosom again responded to the note of agony that was wrung from her cousin, and she turned her head to hide what she had too plainly betrayed.

"Since that unhappy fray, in which peradventure an innocent and unoffending victim was the result of Harry's intemperance, the bloody offence hath been upon my soul — heavier, I do fear, than upon his own. But unless he repent, and turn aside from his sinful courses, there will, there must come a fearful recompence!"

"Do not sentence him unheard," said Eleanor; but her words were quivering and indistinct. "It was in his own defence, may be, however bitterly the tidings were dropped into your ear. Sure I am," said she more firmly, "that Harry was too kind, too gentle to slay the innocent, and in cold blood!"

"Nay, Eleanor, excuse him not. It may be that the foul deed was done through excess of wine, the fiery heat of debauch, and amid the beastly orgies of intemperance; but is he the less criminal? I tell thee nay; for he hath

added crime to crime, and drawn down, perchance, a double punishment. He is my brother, and thou knowest, if possible, I would palliate his offence ; but hath it not been told, and the very air of yon polluted city was rife and reeking with the deed, that Harry Downes, the best beloved of his father, and the child of many hopes, did wantonly, and unprovoked, rush forth hot and intemperate from the stews. Drawing his sword, did he not swear, — ay, by that Heaven he insulted and defied, that he would kill the first man he met, and — oh, horror ! — was not that fearful oath fulfilled?"

Eleanor had covered her face with her hands, — a convulsive sob shook her frame; but though her heart was on the rack, she uttered no complaint. Maria, inflexible, and, as some might think, rigid, in those principles of virtue wherein she had been educated, yet sorrowed deeply for her cousin, who, from a child, had been her brother Harry's playmate, and the proofs of mutual affection had been too powerful, too early, and too long continued, to be ever effaced. Timid as the frighted fawn, and tender as the wild flower that scarce bent beneath her step, she lay, a bruised reed; the stem that supported her was broken. Her fondest, her only hopes were withered, and the desolating blast of disappointment had passed upon her earliest affections. Her little bark, freighted with all a woman's care and tenderness, lay shivered with the stroke, disabled and a wreck !

Just as the short and murky twilight was expiring, and other lights were substituted, there came a loud summons at the outer gate, where a strong barrier was built across the moat. The females started, as though rendered more

than usually apprehensive that evil tidings were at hand. But they were, in some measure, relieved on hearing that it was only Jem Hazleden, the carrier from Manchester, who had brought a wooden box on one of his pack-horses, which said box had come all the way from London by "Antony's" waggon. Maria thought it might be some package or present from her brother, who had been a year or two in town, taking terms; but a considerable period had now passed since tidings were sent from him. She looked wistfully at the box, a clumsy, ill-favoured thing, without the least symptom of any pleasant communication from such a source; so different from the trim packages that were wont to arrive, containing, may be, the newest London chintz, or a piece of real brocade, or Flanders lace of the rarest workmanship.

"No good lurks in that ugly envelope," thought she; and, stooping down, she examined the direction minutely. It was a quaint crabbed hand, not her brother's, that was certain, and the discovery made her more anxious and uneasy. She turned it over and over, but no clue could be found, no index to the contents. It would have been easy, methinks, to have satisfied herself on this head, but she really felt almost afraid to open it, and yet—— At any rate she would put it off till the morrow. She was so nervous, and out of spirits, that she positively had not courage to open a dirty wooden box, tied round with a bit of hempen cord, and fastened with a few rusty nails. She ordered it to be removed to her bedchamber, and morning, perchance, would dissipate these idle but unpleasant feelings. She went to bed, but could not sleep; the wind and rain beat so heavily against the casement, and the recent excitement kept her restless and awake.

She tried various expedients to soothe and subdue her agitation, but without effect. The rain had ceased to patter on the windows, but the wind blew more fiercely and in more violent gusts than before. The sky was clearing, and a huge Apennine of clouds was now visible as she lay, on which the moonbeams were basking gloriously. Suddenly a ray glided like a spirit into the chamber, and disappeared. Her eyes were, at that moment, directed towards the mysterious box which lay opposite, and her very hair moved with horror and consternation; for, in that brief interval of light, she thought she saw the lid open, and a grisly head glare out hideously from beneath. Every hair seemed to grow sensitive, and every pore to be exquisitely endued with feeling. Her heart throbbed violently, and her brain grew dizzy. Another moonbeam irradiated the chamber. She was still gazing on the box; but whether the foregoing impression was merely hallucinatory, an illusion of the feverish and excited sense, she knew not, for the box was there, undisturbed, grim, silent, and mysterious as before. Yet she could not withdraw her eyes from it. There is a fascination in terror. She could hardly resist a horrible desire, or rather impulse, to leap forth, and hasten towards it. Her brow felt cold and clammy; her eyes grew dim, and as though motes of fire were rushing by; but ere she could summon help, she fell back senseless on her pillow.

Morning was far advanced ere she felt any returning recollection; at first, a confused and dream-like sensation came upon her. Looked wildly round, her eyes rested on the box, and the whole interval came suddenly to her memory. She shuddered at the retrospect; but she was determined, whether it had been fancy or not, to keep

the secret within her own breast, though more undetermined than ever to break open the fearful cause of her disturbance. Yet she durst not seek repose another night, with such a companion. Her apprehensions were not easily allayed, however disposed she might be to treat them as trivial and unfounded.

"Will you not open yonder package that came last night?" enquired Eleanor, as they were sitting down to breakfast. Maria shuddered, as though something loathsome had crossed her. She shook off the reptile thought, which had all the character of some crawling and offensive thing, as it passed her bosom.

"I have not — that is, I — I have not yet ordered it to be undone."

"And why?" said Eleanor, now raising her soft blue eyes, with an expression of wonder and curiosity on her cousin. "It did not use to be thus, when there came one of these couriers from town."

"'Tis not from Harry Downes; and — I care not just now to have the trouble on 't, being jaded and out of spirits."

"I will relieve you of the trouble presently, if you will permit me," said Eleanor, who was not without a secret hope, notwithstanding Maria's assertion, that it was a message of gladness from Harry, with the customary present for his sister, and perhaps a token of kindness for herself.

"Stay!" said Maria, laying her hand on Eleanor as she rose, whilst with a solemn and startling tone she cried, "not yet!" She sat down — Eleanor, pale and trembling sat down too; but her cousin was silent, evidently unwilling to resume the topic.

"To-morrow," said she, when urged; but all further converse on the subject was suspended.

Maria, as the day closed, and the evening drew on apace, gave orders that the box should be removed into a vacant outbuilding, until morning, when, she said, it might be opened in her presence, as it probably contained some articles that she expected, but of which she was not just then in need.

"It's an ugly cumbersome thing," said Dick, as he lugged the wearisome box to its destination. "I wonder what for mistress dunna break it open. Heigho!"

Here he put down his burden, giving it a lusty kick, for sheer wantonness and malice.

"What is't sent here for, thinks't 'ou?" said Betty the house-maid, who had followed Dick for a bit of gossip, and a sort of incipient liking which had not yet issued on his part into any overt acts of courtship and declaration. It was nigh dark, "the light that lovers choose;" and Betty, having disposed herself to the best advantage, awaited the reply of Dick with becoming modesty.

"How do I know the nature o' women's fancies. It would be far easier to know why there's a change o' wind or weather, than the meaning o' their tricks and humours."

"I know not what thee has to complain on," said Betty. "They behaven better to thee nor thou deserves."

"Hoity toity, mistress; dunna be cross, wench. Come gie's a buss an' so"——

"Keep thy jobbernowl to thysel'," said the indignant Betty, when she had made sure of this favour. "Thy great leather paws are liker for Becky Pinnington's red

neck nor mine," continued she, bridling up, and giving vent to some long-suppressed jealousy.

" Lorjus days, but thou's mighty quarrelsome and peevish; I ne'er touch'd Becky's neck, nor nought belongin' to her."

" Hush," said Betty, withdrawing herself from the approaches of her admirer. " Some'at knocks!"

Dick hastened to the door, supposing that somebody was dodging them.

" 'Tis somethin' i' that box!" said Betty; and they listened in the last extremity of terror. Again there was a low dull knock, which evidently came from the box, and the wooers were certain that the old one was inside. In great alarm they rushed forth, and at the kitchen chimney corner Dick and his companion were seen with blanched lips and staring eyes, almost speechless with affright.

Next morning the story was bruited forth, with amendments and additions, according to the fancy of the speaker, so that, in the end, the first promulgers could hardly recognise their own. The grim-looking despatch was now the object of such terror, that scarcely one of them durst go into the place where it stood. It was not long ere Maria Downes became acquainted with the circumstance, and she thought it was high time these imaginary terrors should be put an end to. She felt ashamed that she had given way to her own apprehensions on the subject, which doubtless were, in part, the occasion of the reports she heard, by the seeming mystery that was observed in her manner and conduct. She determined that the box should be opened forthwith. It was daylight, be it remembered, when this resolution was made, and, con-

sequently, she felt sufficiently courageous to make the attempt.

But there was not one amongst the domestics who durst accompany her on this bold errand, — an attack, they conceived, on the very den of some evil spirit, who would inevitably rush forth and destroy them.

Alone, therefore, and armed with the necessary implements, was she obliged to go forth to the adventure.

The terrified menials saw her depart; and some felt certain she would never come back alive; others did not feel satisfied as to their own safety, should their mistress be the victim. All was terror and distress; pale and anxious faces huddled together, and every eye prying into his neighbour's for some ground of hope or confidence. Some thought they heard the strokes, dull heavy blows, breaking through the awful stillness which they almost felt. These intimations ceased; and a full half hour had intervened; an age of suspended horror, when — just as their apprehensions were on the point of leading them on to some desperate measures for relieving the suspense, which was almost beyond endurance, — to their great joy, their mistress returned; who, though appearing much agitated, spoke to them rather hastily, and with an attempt to smile at their alarm.

" Yonder box," said she passing by, " is like to shame your silly fears. Some wag hath sent ye a truss of straw — for a scrubbing wisp, maybe." But there was, in the hurried and unusual hilarity of her speech, something so forced and out of character, that it did not escape even the notice of her domestics. Some, however, went immediately to the place, and after much hesitation lifted up the lid, when lo, a bundle of straw was the reward of

their curiosity. By degrees, they began to rummage further into the contents; but the whole interior was filled with this rare and curious commodity. They could hardly believe their eyes; and Dick, especially, shook his head, and looked as though he knew or suspected more than he durst tell; — a common expedient with those whose mountain hath brought forth something very like the product of this gigantic mystery.

Dick was the most dissatisfied with the result, feeling himself much chagrined at so unlooked-for a termination to his wonderful story, and he kept poking into and turning about the straw with great sullenness and pertinacity. His labours were not altogether without success.

"Look! here's other guess stuff than my ladie's bed straw," said he, at the same time holding up a lock of it, for the inspection of his companions. They looked, and there was evidently a clot of blood! This was a sufficient confirmation of their surmises; and Dick, though alarmed as well as the rest, felt his sagacity and adroitness wonderfully confirmed amongst his fellows. They retired, firmly convinced that some horrible mystery was attached thereto, which all their guessing could not find out.

At night, as Dick was odding about, he felt fidgety and restless. He peeped forth at times toward the outhouse where the box was lying, and as he passed he could not refrain from casting a glance from the corner of his eye, through the half closed door. The bloody clot he had seen, dwelt upon his imagination; it haunted him like a spectre. He went to bed before the usual hour, but could not sleep; he tossed and groaned, but the drowsy god would not be propitiated. The snoring of a servant in the next bed, too, proved anything but anodyne or oblivion

to his cares. He could not sleep, do what he would. Having pinched his unfortunate companion till he was tired, but with no other success than a loud snort, and generally a louder snore than ever, in the end, Dick, rendered desperate, jumped out of bed, and walked or rather staggered across the floor. He looked through the window. It was light, but the sky was overcast, though objects below might readily be distinguished. The out-house, where the box lay, was in full view; and, as he was looking out listlessly for a few minutes, he saw a female figure bearing a light, who was gliding down stealthily, as he thought, in the yard below. She entered the building, and Dick could hardly breathe, he was so terrified. He watched until his eyes ached before she came out again, when he saw plainly it was his mistress. She bore something beneath her arm; and as Dick's curiosity was now sufficiently roused to overcome all fear of consequences, he stole quickly down stairs, and by a short route got sufficiently on her track to watch her proceedings unobserved. He followed into the garden. She paused, for the first time, under a huge sycamore tree in the fence, and laid down her burden. She drew something from beneath her cloak, and, as he thought, began to dig. When this operation was completed, she hastily threw in the burden, and filled up the hole again; after which, with a rapid step, she came back to the house. Dick was completely bewildered. He hesitated whether or not to examine immediately into the nature of the deposit, which his mistress seemed so desirous to conceal; but, as he had no light, and his courage was not then screwed up to the attempt, he satisfied himself at present with observing the situation, intending to take some other opportunity

to explore this hidden treasure. That his mistress's visit had some connection with the contents of the mysterious box was now certain, and whatever she had concealed was part of its contents, a conclusion equally inevitable; but that she should be so wishful to hide it, was a problem not easy to be explained without examination. Was it money? The clotted blood forbade this surmise. A horrible suspicion crossed him; but it was too horrible for Dick to indulge.

Wondering and guessing he retraced his steps, and morning dawned on his still sleepless eyelids.

Some weeks passed by, but he found none other opportunity for examination. Somebody or something was always in the way, and he seemed destined to remain ignorant of all that he was so anxious to ascertain.

After the arrival of the box, Maria Downes never mentioned her brother, unless he was alluded to; and even then she waved the subject as soon as possible, whenever it happened to be incidentally mentioned. Eleanor saw there was an evident reluctance to converse on these matters; and, however she might feel grieved at the change, in the end she forbore enquiry.

One morning her cousin entered the breakfast-room, where Eleanor was awaiting her arrival. Her face was pale,—almost deathly,—and her lips livid and quivering. Her eyes were swollen, starting out, and distended with a wild and appalling expression. She beckoned Eleanor to follow; silently she obeyed, but with a deadly and heart-sickening apprehension. Something fearful, as connected with the fate of her cousin Harry, was doubtless the cause of this unusual proceeding. Maria led the way up the staircase, and on coming to the landing, she pointed to a

square opening in the wall, like unto the loop-hole of a turret stair. Here she saw something dark obstructing the free passage of the light, which, on a closer examination, presented the frightful outline of a human skull! Part of the flesh and hairy scalp were visible, but the whole was one dark and disgusting mass of deformity. She started back, with a look of enquiry, towards her cousin. Hideous surmises crowded upon her while she beheld the features of Maria Downes convulsed with some untold agony.

"Oh speak—speak to me!" cried Eleanor, and she threw her arms about her cousin's neck, sobbing aloud in the full burst of her emotion. Maria wept too. The rising of the gush relieved her, and she spoke. Every word went, as with a burning arrow, to Eleanor's heart.

"I have hidden it until now; but—but Heaven has ordained it. His offence was rank—most foul,—and his disgrace—a brother's disgrace, hangs on me. That skull is Harry's! Believe it as thou wilt, but the truth is no less true. The box, sent by some unknown hand, I opened alone, when I beheld the ghastly, gory features of him who was once our pride, and ought to have been our protection. My courage seemed to rise with the occasion. I concealed it with all speed until another opportunity, when I buried this terrible memorial—for ever, as I hoped, from the gaze and knowledge of the world. I thought to hide this foul stain upon our house; to conceal it, if possible, from every eye; but the grave gives back her dead! The charnel gapes. That ghastly head hath burst its cold tabernacle, and risen from the dust, without hands, unto its former gazing-place. Thou knowest, Eleanor, with what delight, when a child, he was accustomed to climb

up to that little eylet-hole, gazing out thereat for hours, and playing many odd and fantastic tricks through this loop-hole of observation."

Eleanor could not speak; she stood the image of unutterable despair.

"In that dreadful package," continued Maria, "this writing was sent:—'Thy brother has at length paid the forfeit of his crimes. The wages of sin is death! and his head is before thee. Heaven hath avenged the innocent blood he hath shed. Last night, in the lusty vigour of a drunken debauch, passing over London Bridge, he encounters another brawl, wherein, having run at the watchman with his rapier, one blow of the bill which they carry, severed thy brother's head from his trunk. The latter was cast over the parapet into the river. The head only remained, which an eye-witness, if not a friend, hath sent to thee!'"

Eleanor fell senseless to the ground, whence her cousin conveyed her to the bed from which she never rose.

The skull was removed, secretly at first, by Maria herself; but invariably it returned. No human power could drive it thence. It hath been riven in pieces, burnt, and otherwise destroyed; but ever on the subsequent day it is seen filling its wonted place. Yet was it always observed that sore vengeance lighted on its persecutors. One who hacked it in pieces was seized with such horrible torments in his limbs, that it seemed as though he might be undergoing the same process. Sometimes, if only displaced, a fearful storm would arise, so loud and terrible, that the very elements themselves seemed to become the ministers of its wrath.

Nor would this wilful piece of mortality allow of the little aperture being walled up, — for it remains there still,

whitened and bleached by the weather, looking forth from those rayless sockets upon the scenes which when living they had once beheld.

Maria Downes was the only survivor of the family. Her brother's death and deplorable end so preyed on her spirits, that she rejected all offers of marriage. The estate passed into other hands, and another name owns the inheritance.

RIVINGTON PIKE.

Drawn by G. Pickering.

Engraved by E. Duncan.

RIVINGTON PIKE.

London. Published by Longman &c. 1831.

RIVINGTON PIKE.

This beacon stands on a conical hill at an elevation of 1545 feet from the level of the sea. An immense pile of wood was raised here when the alarm of the French invasion prevailed, at the beginning of the present century.

Rivington Hall was for many ages the seat of one of the Pilkingtons, of which family Fuller says—"The Pilkingtons were gentlemen of repute in this shire before the Conquest;" and the chief of them then sought for, after espousing the cause of Harold, was fain to disguise himself as a mower; in allusion to which the man and scythe was taken as their crest. James Pilkington, a descendant, and Master of St. John's, Cambridge, was one of the six divines appointed to correct the Book of Common Prayer: for which, and other services, he was in 1560 created Bishop of Durham. After the suppression of the great northern rebellion in 1569, headed by the Earls of Northumberland and Westmoreland, he claimed the lands and goods of the rebels attainted in his bishopric. In support of this claim he brought an action against the

queen for a recovery of the forfeited estates; and though his royal mistress was accustomed to speak of unfrocking bishops, the reverend divine prosecuted his suit with so much vigour and success, that nothing but the interposition of parliament prevented the defendant from being beaten in her own courts.

The present erection, the scene of our story, was built in the year 1732, by Mr. Andrews, the owner of Rivington Hall, whose family have, for many generations, with, perhaps, one interruption only, had it in possession.

RIVINGTON PIKE;

OR,

THE SPECTRE HORSEMAN.

——— " Are you a man?
Ay, and a bold one, that dare look on that
Which might appal the devil."

Shakspeare.

THE evening was still and sultry. The clear and glowing daylight was gone, exchanged for the dull, hazy, and depressing atmosphere of a summer's night. The cricket chirped in the walls, and the beetle hummed his drowsy song, wheeling his lumbering and lazy flight over the shorn meadows.

It was about harvest time, — the latter end of August. The moors were clothed in their annual suit of gay and thickly-clustered blossoms, but their bloom and freshness was now faded. Here and there a sad foretokening of dingy brown pervaded the once glowing brilliancy of their

dye, like a suit of tarnished finery on some withering and dilapidated beau.

A party of sportsmen had that day taken an unusually wide range upon the moors, stretching out in wild and desolate grandeur through the very centre of the county, near the foot of which stands the populous neighbourhood of Bolton-le-Moors. Rivington Pike, an irregularly conical hill rising like a huge watch-tower from these giant masses of irreclaimable waste, is a conspicuous and well-known object, crowned by a stone edifice for the convenience of rest and shelter to those whom curiosity urges to the fatigue and peril of the ascent. The view from this elevated spot, should the day be favourable, certainly repays the adventurer; but not unfrequently an envious mist, or a passing shower, will render these efforts unavailing, to scan the wide creation,— or rather but a circlet of that creation,— from an insignificant hillock, scarcely an atom in the heap of created matter, that is itself but as a grain of dust in the vast space through which it rolls. But to our tale, or rather, it may be, to our task,—for the author is now sitting in his study, with the twilight of as dull, hazy, and oppressive an atmosphere about him, as beset our adventurous sportsmen at the close of their campaign;— enervating and almost paralysing thought;— the veriest foe of "soaring fantasy," which the mere accident of weather will prevent from rising into the region where she can reign without control, her prerogative unquestioned and unlimited.

The party to whom we have just referred, consisted of three individuals, with their servants, biped and quadruped, from whom their masters derived the requisite assistance during their useful and arduous exploits,— the results

being conspicuous in the death of some dozen or two of silly grouse or red game, with which these hills are tolerably well supplied during the season. But, alas! we are not sportsmen ourselves, and bitterly do we lament that we are unable to describe the desperate conflict, and the mighty issues of that memorable day; the hopes, fears, and *fire-escapes* of the whole party: the consumption of powder, and the waste of flint, or the comparative merits of Moll and Rover, we shall not attempt to set forth in our "*veritable prose*," lest we draw down the wrath of some disappointed fowler upon us, for meddling with matters about which we are so lamentably ignorant, and, we are afraid to say, in some measure, wilfully deficient. To the spoils, when obtained, it may be that we are less indifferent; and we hail, with favourable reminiscences and anticipations, the return of another 12th of August, — an era which we would earnestly and affectionately beseech our friends to remember likewise, for purposes too interesting in the history of our domestic arrangements to allow them willingly to forget.

But the August in which our narrative opens, was many years ago, — though not precisely in the olden time, — when the belief in old-world fancies and delights was not in danger of being blazed out by "diffusions of useful knowledge," which "useful" knowledge consists in dissipating some of our most pleasant dreams, our fondest and most cherished remembrances. We are afraid a writer of "Traditions" must be looked upon with inconceivable scorn by these worthies whose aim is to throw open the portals of Truth to the multitude; or, as the phrase goes, she is to be made plain to the "meanest capacity." For our own parts, we never were enamoured

with that same despotic, hard-favoured, cross-grained goddess, Truth: she "commendeth not" to our fancy; nor in reality is she half so worthy of their homage, as her ardent and enthusiastic worshippers imagine. We are more than ever inclined to believe that imagination is the great source of our pleasures; and, in consequence we look not with an eye of favour on those who would persuade us that our little hoard of enjoyment is counterfeit, not being the sterling coin of sovereign and "immutable truth."

Little did we imagine or anticipate that we should be so deviously betrayed from our subject. We never had the temerity to speak of ourselves before. Thoughts, wishes, and opinions, were studiously concealed; and if we have been led unwarily and unintentionally from the subject, in this our concluding effort, that very circumstance alone is a sufficient warranty against a repetition of the offence.

The day was fast closing, when the party had surmounted the last hill on their return to the valley. For the sake of proximity, they had spent the previous night in a little wayside tavern at the foot of the descent; and they now looked down towards the place of their destination, still some weary miles distant,—their prospect partly interrupted by the huge hill called the Pike, of which we have before spoken. From the elevation whereon they now stood, the ascent was but short to the summit of the beacon, though somewhat abrupt and difficult of access. When they had gained the ridge overlooking the valley, with the flat and fertile tract of low lands stretching out into the dark and apparently interminable vista, towards the coast, the elder of the sportsmen exclaimed,—

" Now, Mortimer, mayhap you have never seen a storm in our wilds; but, if my judgment err not, this happy event is in a very auspicious train for accomplishment."

The speaker looked towards the south, where the grim clouds were already accumulated, evidently pouring out a copious blessing in their progress. From the direction of the wind, they, too, were threatened with a speedy participation.

" These summer storms always make for the hills," continued he; " and, looking yonder, I apprehend that we are precisely in the very line of its path."

" I do like to watch the gathering of a storm, Pilkington," replied Mortimer. " Surely the out-pouring vials of its wrath must be terrifically sublime in these regions. I would not miss so glorious a sight for the world."

" In a snug shelter, may be, at our hostelrie below; with a mug of the right barley-bree buzzing at our elbow, — oat cake and cheese conformable thereto."

" Nay, here; with the sky opening above our heads, and the broad earth reeking and weltering under the wide grasp of the tempest. See! how the crooked lightning darts between the coiled clouds, like a swift messenger from yon dark treasure-house of wrath!"

This was said by a third individual, named Norton; a young man who lived in the neighbourhood; a friend and former schoolfellow of the preceding speakers, — only one of whom, Mortimer, resided in a distant county, and was on a visit with Norton for the first time.

" Like a train of gunpowder, perhaps, thou meanest, Norton?" said the less enthusiastic Pilkington, whose residence, too, was but a few miles distant; " and, further-

more, I warn ye all, that unless we can house, and that right speedily, we shall have the storm about our heads, and may be lose our way if the mist comes on, or get soused over head and ears in some bog-trap. We'll climb yonder hill, Norton; whence we may survey the broil and commotion from our 'watch tower in the skies,' under a tidy roof and a dry skin. Thou mayest tarry here an thou wilt, and offer thyself a sacrifice on these altars of Jupiter Pluvius."

The whole party — dogs, helps, and servants — were soon sheltered in the little square tower upon the summit, and the predictions of the elder and more experienced of them were soon verified. Almost on the entrance of the last of the group, came down the deluge in one broad sheet, an "even down-pour," so loud and terrible, accompanied by a burst of hail, that they were threatened with an immediate invasion of their citadel, through several crevices in both roof and windows.

A peal of thunder, loud, long, and appalling, shook their shelter to its base. The very foundations of the hill seemed to rock with the concussion. Their lofty tabernacle hung suspended in the very bosom of the clouds, big with their forky terrors. The lightning began to hiss and quiver, and the sky to open its wide jaws above them, as though to devour its prey. The roar and rattle of the wind and hail, mingled with the crash and roll of the contending elements, made the stoutest of them tremble, and silenced several loud tongues that were usually the foremost in jest and banter.

"Well, Norton," said Pilkington, "I reckon you are not in the mind to try a berth abroad in this rude atmosphere, during such an angry and merciless disposition

of your deity. 'Tis a *mêlée*, I imagine, to your heart's content."

"Norton is hearkening to these rude tongues that do speak so lustily!" said Mortimer. "He can, peradventure, interpret their mystic voice."

Norton was in the attitude of intense and earnest expectation or enquiry; his head slightly turned and depressed on one side, the opposite ear raised, so as to catch the most distinct impressions of sound. His eyes might have been listening too, yet his vision was absorbed, and apparently withdrawn from surrounding objects. He was standing near the window, and the workings of his countenance betrayed a strange and marvellous expression of wonder and anxiety.

It grew still darker, and the rain came down in torrents. The thunder-cloud, as though attracted by the height of their situation, kept hovering over the hill, and often seemed to coil round, and wrap them in its terrific bosom. Night, they knew, was about setting in, but they were still unable to issue forth without imminent danger. The thick cloud, by which they were enveloped, would have rendered it a hazardous attempt to proceed under any circumstances.

"We are in excellent condition for a night's lodging in our good fortalice," said Pilkington: "it hath stood many a close siege from the elements, and will bide a stouter brush before it yields."

"But surely the storm is too violent to continue. I hope we may venture out ere it be long," said Mortimer anxiously.

"May be the clouds will either be driven off, or disperse. Should a breeze spring up from the west, which is not

unusual after such a turbulent condition of the atmosphere, it will clear us rapidly from these lumbering masses of almost impregnable vapour. I think Norton is still in close communion with the elements. I can yet see his outline by the window. I thought the last flash lighted on his visage, as though it would tarry there a while ere it departed!"

The servants were huddled in a corner by the door, sitting on the ground, with the dogs between their legs: the timid animals, terrified exceedingly at every thunder-peal, and shivering, as though from cold and distress. Suddenly one of them began to growl; and a short, sharp bark from another, with eyes and ears turned towards the entrance, seemed to announce the approach of an intruder.

The brutes now stuffed their officious noses in the crevice beneath the door, but immediately withdrew them, evidently in great terror, as they slunk back, trembling and dismayed, to the opposite side of the chamber, where they crouched as if to screen themselves from correction.

"What ails the cowards?" exclaimed Norton, who had apparently observed their proceedings by the scanty light that was yet left.

"They are witch'd, I think," said one of the men; "or they 've seen, or haply smelt, a boggart."

"'Tis o'er soon for such like gear; they stir not abroad before the bats and owls be gone to bed," said another.

"Ay! your common every day sort o' breein' dare na' show their bits o' wizen cheeks by daylight; but there be some 'at will abroad at all hours, without fear o' being laid by the parson. '*The Spectre Horseman*' I think they

ca' him. I've heard my grannam tell as how it feared neither sunshine nor shade, but ——"

Here the speaker's voice failed him, every eye and ear being turned towards the entrance. There seemed to come a sound from without, as though a horse were urged to the utmost of its speed, his clattering hoofs driven to the very threshold, and there he paused, awaiting some communication from those within.

"Nought living or breathing," cried Mortimer, "could come that bent. Perch'd as we are, on this tall steep summit, 'tis not possible for ——"

"Hush!" said Norton. "I verily think 'tis some adventure which I must achieve. What if I should turn giant-killer; this invisible steed being sent for mine especial use, whereon I may ride, like Amadis, or Sir Lancelot, or any other knight or knave o' the pack, delivering damsels, slaying dragons and old wicked magicians, by virtue of this good right arm alone."

"Thou art a strange enthusiast, Norton," said Pilkington. "Thy love of the marvellous will, sooner or later, thrust thee into some ridiculous or perilous scrape, from which not all thy boasted prowess can deliver thee unshent."

"Hark!" said one of the servants, in a whisper. "Is not that a knock?"

The loud uproar of the elements had suddenly abated, and the sound, from whatever source it might arise, was distinctly audible to the whole group. A dull hollow blow seemed to vibrate round the walls, as if they had been struck with some heavy instrument. They seemed to breathe the very atmosphere of terror. A strange feeling, portentous and unaccountable, pervaded every bosom. The quadrupeds, too, crept behind their masters for pro-

tection. Fear, like other strong and unreasonable impulses, rapidly becomes infectious. In all likelihood, the mere mention of the Spectre Horseman, together with their novel and somewhat dangerous situation, had disposed t' ?ir minds for the reception of any stray marvels, however ridiculous or improbable. Yet this impression could not extend to the trembling brutes, evidently under the influence of alarm, and from a similar source.

Another blow was heard, louder than before. Those who were nearest, crept farther from the entrance; but Norton, as though bent on some wild exploit, approached the door; he raised the latch, and, as it swung slowly back, most of the party beheld a figure on horseback, motionless before the opening. From the height they occupied, this mysterious visiter was depicted in a clear bold outline against a mass of red angry-looking clouds, towards the south-east, on the edge of which hung the broad disk of the moon, breaking through "Alps" of clouds; her calm sweet glance fast dissipating the wrath that yet lowered on the brow of Heaven. The intruder wore a dark coloured vestment; a low-crowned hat surmounted his figure. His steed was black, and heavily built. Probably, from the position whence he was seen, both horse and rider looked almost gigantic. Not a word was spoken. The stranger stood apparently immoveable, like some huge equestrian statue in the dim and mystic twilight.

Norton's two friends were evidently astonished and alarmed, but he scarcely evinced any surprise; some superior and unknown source of excitement overpowered the fear he might otherwise have felt. Silence continued for a few moments, the strange figure remaining perfectly

still. Pilkington approached nearer to his friend, who was yet standing near the threshold, gazing intently on the vision before him. He whispered a few words over Norton's shoulder.

"Knowest thou this stranger, Norton?"

"Yes," he replied, with great earnestness and solemnity; "years have gone by since I saw him. Thou never knewest mine uncle; but that is he, or one sense hath turned traitor to the rest. This very night, twelve years ago,—it was just before I left home for school ——" His voice now became inaudible to his friend; who observed him, after a gaze of enquiry on the stranger, suddenly disappear through the opening. The door was immediately closed by a loud and violent gust. Flying open again with the rebound, the figure of Norton was seen rapidly descending the hill, towards the south-east, preceded by the mysterious horseman. The light was too feeble for enabling them to ascertain the course they took; but it seemed probable that Norton was away over the hills with the unknown messenger. Their first impulse was to follow; but the impossibility of overtaking the fugitives, and the near approach of night, would have rendered it a vain and, probably, a perilous attempt. Looking anxiously down the dark ravine, where Norton had so strangely disappeared, Pilkington was startled by a voice from behind; turning, he saw it was the man who had previously dropped those mysterious hints about the "Spectre Horseman," which now vividly recurred to his memory and imagination.

"Master," said this personage, respectfully touching his cap, "you had better not follow."

"Follow!" said Pilkington, as though bewildered; and

the words were but the echo of his thoughts; "follow!—I cannot,—yet why should we not make the attempt?"

"Step in, if you please, sir. I should not like to speak of it here." He said this hurriedly, in a tone of deep anxiety and apprehension, looking wistfully around and over the dark hills, fearful, apparently, that others were listening. Pilkington obeyed, but with reluctance. The door was cautiously latched; and to prevent the wind, which now began to rise in louder gusts, from bursting this crazy barrier, a heavy stone was laid to the threshold.

"It is—let me see—" said Martin, counting the lapse upon his fingers; "ay,—ten—eleven—'tis twelve years ago, on this very night, St. Bartlemy's eve, my father, a hale old man at that time of day, some'at given, though, to hunting and fowling a bit o' moonlights—and a fine penny he made on 't, for many a week, selling the birds at Manchester.—Well, as I was saying;—one evening before dusk—the sun had but just cooled his chin i' the water away, yonder—he trudged off wi' the dogs, Crab and Pincher—two as cunning brutes as ever run afore a tail. They might ha' known the errand they were going on, sneakin' about wi' such hang-dog looks, which they always took care to put on when t' ould man began to get ready for a night's foraging. They would follow at his heels, almost on their bellies, for fear o' being seen by the Squire's men; but when fairly astart for the game, they could show as much breeding as the best trained pointer i' the parish. I am getting sadly wide o' my story, your honour; but I used to like the cubs dearly, and many a time I have played with 'em, when I was n't a bit bigger than themselves. They came to a sad end, sir, like most other rogues and thieves besides, and"——

" But we are not getting an inch nearer the end of the story, all this time," said Pilkington.

" True, your honour; but I'll piece to it presently. — I was a great lubberly lad, I know, and tented the cattle then upon the moors. Well, on this same night, as I was saying, my mother and the rest were gone to bed, my father was upon the hills, and I was watching at home, thinkin', may be, of the next Michaelmas fair, and many a fine bit of fun thereby. The fire was gone out, but I had lighted a scrap of candle, which sweeled sadly down, I remember, in the socket. Well, just as I was getting sleepy, I heard a scratch, and then a whine at the door. ' What's to do now,' thinks I, ' that the dogs are here again so soon?' an', without more ado, I lifted the latch, when, sure enough, it was them, dirty draggled beasts, they might ha' bin possed through a slutch-pit. ' Where's yere master?' says I; — the things took no heed to me, but began licking themselves, an' tidying their nasty carcasses, till the house verily reek'd again. — ' So, friends,' says I, ' if ye 're for that gait, you may as well take a turn i' the yard,' an' without more ado, I bundled 'em off, with a sound kick into the bargain. Well, you see, I hearkened till my ears crack'd for my father's foot; but I heard nought except the crickets, and the little brook that runs behind the house, for every thing was so still I could have heard a mouse stir. I opened the door, and looked out, I think, into as clear and mellow a night as ever gazed down from the sky upon our quiet hills. Then I went to the gate, and looked up the road which takes you into the little glen by a short path, away up to the high meadows; but I could neither see him, nor hear any

likelihood of his coming. I could ha' told his footstep amongst a thousand, and his cough, too, for that matter. I felt myself growing all of a shake, an' the very hairs seemed crawling over my head; a pea might have knocked me down, and, for the life of me, I durst not venture further — It was something so strange that the dogs should come back without their master — I was sure some mischief had happened to him. All at once it jumped into my head that he had stuck fast in some of these bogs or mosses, and the rascal curs had left him there instead of their own pitiful carcasses; but that my father should be so forefoughten as to let himself be nabbed in one of these bog-traps, I could hardly believe. Yet the dogs — ay, there was the mischief — and the lurching ne'er-do-weels coming back in such dismal pickle. I went back to the house, for I durst not stay abroad; and yet, when I was in-doors, I could not bide there neither; so I walked up and down the house-flags, like as I waur dazed. I durst not go to bed; so there I was, and for a couple of hours too, in a roarin' pickle, that I would not be steeped in again for a' the moor-gates between here and Chorley."

"Go on; — we've no loitering time now," said Pilkington; "thy story sticks fast, I fear, like thy father i' the bog."

"Why, I was but rincing the evil thoughts out of my mind, as it were, for they come about me like a honey-swarm at the thoughts on 't; and I don't just like their company at present, it minds me so o' the time when this plaguy chance befel my father."

"He did not tarry away for good and all, I reckon?"

"You shall hear, sir, if you but gie me a taste o' the

flask; for I feel just like to go into a swoom, or some tantrum or another."

Martin took a strong pull at the bottle, and, thus refreshed, he resumed his story.

"Well, you see as how I waited, and my mind was like as it might ha' been set on a pismire hillock, I waur so uneasy. The dogs, too, began to howl pitifully at the door, so I let the poor things in for a bit o' company. I had not waken'd mother; for I kept thinking I'd wait a while longer, and a while longer, as I never in all my life liked to bring bad news. Well, it might be about two or three hours I went on at that gait, an' just as I was pondering as to whether I should go up stairs or not, I heard something come with a quick step through the gate and up the flags to the door. It was not like father's foot, neither; it was so terrible sharp and hasty. I felt as if I'd been strucken of a heap. My knees shook, an' dither'd as if I'd had the ague. Up goes the latch; for I could not stir — I was holden fast to the floor. The door bangs open in a fearfu' hurry, and in comes my father, as though 'Legion' had been at his heels. He looked pale, and almost fleered out of his wits, so I made sure he had seen the bogle, that my granam used to frighten us with. — 'Father, father,' says I, as soon as I could speak, 'what's happened? ha' ye seen it?' He did not say a word, but sat down in the big rocking-chair by t' hob end, when he tilted his head back, and began swingin' back'ard and for'ard, moaning all the while as if he waur in great trouble. I looked at him, as well as I could, for I had lighted a whole candle a while before. I sat down, too, and not another word could I say. — But, my conscience! what a racket the dogs made when they saw him! They

jumped, and frisked, and almost cried for joy, as though they had gi'en him up for lost, and were desperately fain, poor things, at his return. The first word he spoke was to these dummies; for they whined, wriggled, and wagged their tails, and licked his fingers, enough to have drawn words from a stone wa'. 'Ay, ay, ye sneaking rascals,' said he, 'you left me wi' yere tails down low enough, and as fast as your legs could lilt ye off, when I was forefoughten wi'——' Here he looked round, with a face so dismal and disturbed, that I verily think I should not forget it if I waur at my last shrift. Taking this opportunity, as I may say, I ventured a word or so. The old man gave me another of those terrible looks before he spoke.—'Eh, me!' said he, 'my days are but few now, I reckon.'—I 've seen the——' He stopped and looked round again; then he said, almost in a whisper,—'I've seen him, Martin!'—'I thought so,' says I.—'I've seen th' ould one, I believe,' says he; 'an' that's more nor I'll like to do again, or thee either. We've done wi' our night-work now, an' the dogs may just go where they can get an honest bellyful.' You may be sure I was sadly fear'd. I durst not ask him how it happened that he should have snappered upon old Sootypaws; but, in a while, he saved me the speerin', and, as well as I can think, this was the account of his misadventure:—

"'I was goin' up by the Pike,' said he, 'and a brave shower of moonlight there was, weltering on the side of the hill, when, just as I got behind it there in the shadow, I thought I saw somethin' big and black, standing among a little clump of gorses afore me. I felt started a somehow, but I rubb'd my forehead and eyes, and looked again. It did not shift, so I thought I might as well make the best o' the matter, an' went for'ard without altering my

speed. Well, what should I see when I got nearer, but a great spanking black horse, and a littleish man upon it, who seemed just waiting till I came up. I stood still when I got within a yard or two, expecting he would speak first, for I thought as how it might be some poor body belike, that had lost his way in crossing the moors. But he did not say a word, which I thought mighty uncouth and uncivil. So making my best speech for the once, though fearful it was some fellow watching to waylay me, I asked him civilly how he did, and so on. Then I ask'd if he waur in want of a guide over the hills any way.' The thing here set up a great rollockin' horse-laugh, that frightened my father worse than any thing he said; but he durst not turn back for fear he might follow, and happen to catch him as he run, so he stood still, dithering like a top all the while.

"'Canst show me the road to the Two Lads?'* he ask'd, as soon as he had gotten his laugh out.

"'That can I,' says my father, 'as well as any body i' the parish.'—'On with thee, then,' says the devilkin, 'and don't mind picking your way, friend, for my horse can tread a bog without wetting a hair of his foot.' My father

* The Two Lads are heaps of loose stones, about ten or twelve feet in height, set up, as the story goes, to commemorate the death of two shepherd boys, who were found on the spot after a long search, missing their way during a heavy fall of snow. This tale is most probably incorrect; these mural monuments have been gradually accumulated by the passers by;—a custom handed down from the most remote ages, and still observed as an act of religious worship in the east. There is little doubt but they are remnants yet lingering amongst us of the "altars upon every high hill," once dedicated to Baal, or Bel, the great object of Carthaginian or Phœnician worship, from which our Druidical rites were probably derived.

walked on, but the dogs kept a wary eye towards the stranger, he thought, and hung their tails, an' slunk behind, like as they were mightily afeard on him. But it wasn't long afore my father began to wonder within himself what this unlikely thing could want there at the Two Lads, which as you know is scarcely two miles off yonder, and on the highest and ugliest part of the whole commoning; a place, too, which is always said to have a bad name sticking to it. He durst not ask him his business though, and they went on without speaking, until the Two Lads were just peeping out before them into the clear soft moonlight. 'There they are,' said my father; 'and now I'll bid your honour good night.'—'Stay,' said his companion; 'I may want you a little while yet, so budge on if you please.' Somehow my father felt as though he durst not refuse, and however loth to such company, he trudged away till they came together to the spot. 'Now,' says the little gentleman, 'lift up that big heap of stones there, and I'll tell you what to do with them.'—'Sir,' says my father, 'you are in jest belike.'—'Not a bit of it,' replied the other; 'see, 'tis easy as flying:' wi' that, he leaps off his horse, and at one stroke of his switch, up they went, jump, jump, jump, like a batch of crows from a corn-field. The dogs set up a fearful howl, and, without once turning to see what was behind them, set off helter skelter through bog and bush for the nearest, and left my father to himself with the foul fiend. All at once it popped into his head, the tales he had once heard about the '*Spectre Horseman*,' that was said to ramble about these hills, sometimes in the air, sometimes on the ground, like the dark clouds and their shadows upon the soft grass, without ever a footprint. My poor father could have wished the ground to gape and swallow him, he said, he was so

frightened. Where the stones had been, there was a great hole gaping, like one of the mouths of the bottomless pit, and try how he would, he could not turn away his eyes from it. 'That 's the place,' said this fearful thing; but my father was ready to cower down with terror. He could not speak, but he thought he saw a great, long black arm thrust out of the hole. 'Take what he gives thee,' says black face, 'and make haste.' But he might as well have spoke to the whins and gorses, for the chance of being obeyed. 'Take it,' said this ill-tongued limb of old Harry, in a voice like thunder. But my father could not stir, and then there waur shrieks, yells, and moans, and such noises as he had never heard. The creature looked angry, and full of venom as a toad. 'I shall miss my time,' said he; and with that he begun to listen, for there came the sound of footsteps on the dark heather, and then the ugly thing did laugh for very gladness. 'Go, fool,' he cried, 'here comes one better than thee;' and with that he lent my father a kick that might have sent him across the valley, at a moderate calculation, had he not remembered an old witch charm, which he mumbled as he fell. How long he lay there, and what happened the while, he did not know, but when he awoke he saw the heap was in its place again, the moon looking down bright and beautiful as ever, as if she thought nothing particular had taken place. He could hardly persuade himself that he had not dreamed an ugly dream, until he remembered the spot, and how he had been enticed, or rather forced there against his will. You may be sure he made the best of his way home again, where he came in the condition I have just told you. Not many days after, we heard that a gentleman of no mean con-

dition, that lived not many miles off, I have forgotten his name, and who was supposed to be crossing the hills on that very night, was lost. He never appeared afterwards. It was generally thought he was swallowed up in some bog, but my father always believed that he had fallen into the clutches of that Evil One, from whom he himself had escaped but with the skin of his teeth. From that time to his dying day, was he never known to ramble on the moors again; an altered man he became, sure enough, and our big Bible, with the pictures in it, was brushed fro' the dust. He might be seen with the book upon his knee at the door-stone on a summer's night, and the third bench from the Squire's pew at Blackrod church never missed a tenant, till my father was laid quietly down in the churchyard."

During this recital there had been a close, and almost breathless attention. As he concluded, a buz of agitation pervaded the group; not a word was spoken for a little while, until Pilkington exclaimed, slowly passing one hand over his brow,—

"A marvellous delivery, which I might have been disposed to treat like other marvels, had not our own senses in some measure left with us a show of truth, or probability at least, about the adventure, which, for my own part, I find it difficult to throw off. Exaggerated, and full of improbabilities I admit, yet the story hath some substratum of truth, no doubt, by which it is supported. What it is, would be difficult to ascertain, but the mystery or misapprehension, whatever it be, shall be cleared up, and that speedily."

"Doubtless," said Mortimer; "but first let us return to our lodging. Marvels, being in the inverse ratio to

truth, always appear greatest at a distance; and when the explanation comes, we may perhaps smile at our present embarrassment. The riddle is easy when solved."

"True; but how is that to be accomplished?"

"Let us return to our quarters; we may perhaps find that our companion has arrived there before us."

Pilkington shook his head, incredulously. Indeed the whole affair had made a much greater impression upon him than he was willing to allow, even to himself.

The moon lighted them on their path, as they took the nearest route to their temporary sojourn. Many a cautious glance was cast behind, and many a dark stone or bush,— many a grotesque shadow, assumed the form they feared to encounter. They arrived at their dwelling without molestation,— but— Norton was not there!

"Here is foul play somewhere," said Mortimer thoughtfully. "Think you, Pilkington, that we could find out our way in this quiet moonshine to that same 'Two Lads' which Martin pointed out. I fancy the louts we have about us, durst not venture thither. Indeed, I think it may be prudent to go unattended, on several accounts."

"That is my opinion," said Pilkington; "and as for poking out the way, I can do that readily. I cannot rest without making the attempt at any rate."

"Let us not create any alarm, but steal quietly off, when we have refreshed ourselves," said Mortimer; "we need not tell them of our intent."

"It were best," replied Pilkington, "that we give these knaves a caution first, that they bruit not forth the adventure at present, or until we have more exact information as to the nature of the proceedings it may be needful to adopt."

It was not long ere they commenced their journey, traversing the hill-path in the requisite direction. By day, the pillars are easily seen from some parts of the valley below, and Pilkington had frequently passed them in crossing the moors. A pretty accurate notion of their bearing was thus formed from the point whence they started.

The greater part of the way was trodden in silence. The rivulets were swollen with the heavy rains, and great care was necessary to attain their object in safety. The path was not devoid of danger at any time, by reason of the spongy and uncertain nature of the bogs, accumulated masses of spumous unhealthy vegetation, showing patches of bright green verdure, holding water often to an unknown depth, and sometimes proving fatal to those who dared to venture upon this deceitful and perilous surface. By using great caution, and carefully ascertaining the nature of the ground before them, they passed on, without further inconvenience than that of wading through bogs and ditches, climbing stone walls and embankments, aided by the uninterrupted light of a blazing harvest moon.

They had now accomplished the most fatiguing part of the ascent, the dark heathery crown of the mountain, whereon the moonbeams lay so beautiful, as though nature were one vast region of universal silence, for ever unbroken and undisturbed. It was like gazing on a statue, — there was the semblance of life, but all was silent and motionless, the very stillness startling like a spectre.

Soon they had passed through the creaking heather bushes on the summit, when they saw two rude pillars peeping up from the dark line of the horizon before them. A sensation, not unallied to fear, passed with a sudden

thrill across the deep, unseen sources of feeling, — the sealed fountains of the spirit. They felt as though entering on mysterious or forbidden ground. The hour, — the circumstances which led to their present situation, — their companion's recent and unaccountable disappearance, and the prevalent superstitions connected with this solitary spot, all contributed to their present alarms, with a force and poignancy unusual, and even appalling. They almost expected the " Spectre Horseman " to rush by, or to rise up suddenly before them, and forbid their further progress into his domains.

" I am not prone to pay much heed either to marvels or superstitions, and yet ——" said Mortimer, again pausing after a long silence.

" Why," said Pilkington, " the very air feels rank with mystery. Whatever may be the cause, I never felt more i' the mood for an hour of devotion in my life."

" We may both have need for the exercise ere we depart hence, or my thoughts misgive me," replied Mortimer.

" It may be the mystery connected with our expedition which operates in its own nature upon the mind," said Pilkington. " I feel, as it were, every faculty impressed with some fearful and indissoluble spell. An atmosphere, impervious, and almost impalpable, seems to oppress the spirit. Surely we are on the trail of some demon, and his subtle influence is about us."

" Ah ! " said Mortimer, starting aside with a shudder, as though a serpent stung him.

" Heardest thou aught, Mortimer ? "

" I thought there was a rushing past my ear."

" I heard it too," replied Pilkington, in a low and agitated

tone; "but I heard more, Mortimer. A voice, methought distinct as thine own, swept by: '*Go not,*' was faintly uttered. I am sure I heard the words."

"This place affects me strangely," said Mortimer; "but I will not go back, though the very jaws of the pit were to interpose."

Suddenly a mist gathered about them, not an unusual circumstance in these mountain regions, but a sufficiently portentous one to fasten strongly upon their imaginations, already predisposed to invest every appearance, however trivial, or according to the common course of events, with supernatural terrors. A gust of wind soon curled the vapour into clouds, which swept rapidly on; sometimes with the moonlight through their shattered rifts, then dark and impervious, shutting out the whole hemisphere, and wrapping them as with a cloak. Still they kept on their way, slowly, but in the direction, as near as they could ascertain, towards the place where they hoped to find some clue to their search. They felt convinced, though neither of them could state the nature of their convictions, that the mystery would here terminate.

The wind came on now in heavier and more continuous gusts, like the distant rumble of the ocean. They fancied other sounds were audible in the blast; yells and howlings that seemed to approach nearer with every successive impulse. A sound, like the rush of wings, brushed past them, and, instinctively, they grasped each other by the arm. A moan was distinctly heard; then another, louder and more terrible. A cry of agony succeeded, then a shriek, so loud and appalling, that a cry of horror involuntarily burst from their lips.

"Save us, Father of Mercy!"

It was the cry of faith; a look fixed upon Him "who is not slow to hear, nor impotent to save." The cloud rolled suddenly away, unfolding, as though for the disclosure of some mighty pageant. They saw before them, and within a very few paces, the dark, heavy pillars, looking more black and hideous in the garish light by which they were seen. A cloud or mist seemed to have rolled, as suddenly, from their mental vision; a weight was removed from their apprehensions. They felt as though scarcely acting, previously, as free agents; but impelled by some unseen power, to which every faculty and every thought was in thraldom.

Beside one of the heaps lay a figure, prostrate and motionless. It was the death-like form of Norton! He was, to all appearance, lifeless; with hands clenched, and his whole attitude betokening some recently desperate and painful struggle. They tried to arouse him, and a cordial, with which they moistened his lips, produced some slight symptoms of returning consciousness; but the spark disappeared with the breath that fanned it. The safest plan was evidently to attempt his removal. With as little delay as possible, they bore him gently between them; and, as the first streak of daylight was dawning over the hills, they had the satisfaction to see him safely disposed of in their little hostelrie, whither a surgeon was speedily summoned from the adjacent village. He was yet insensible, but life was not extinct: the medical attendant pronouncing him in great jeopardy, from some violent struggle, and exertion, both of body and mind. Rest, and the most careful attention, were absolutely necessary, lest, with returning consciousness, reason

should be disturbed, and the mind remain bewildered from the agitation previously undergone.

For several weeks this unfortunate victim, as they supposed, to his own vague and supernatural terrors, lay without showing the slightest symptom of recognition. Groans, and incoherent murmurs, after long intervals of silence, proclaimed that life was yet lingering on the threshold of the tabernacle, unwilling for her flight. A cry of terror would sometimes break forth, and his whole frame become violently convulsed, while he seemed to exhaust himself in struggles to escape.

We will not prolong the recital, nor is it needful to relate how the first light glimpse broke through the clouds that had so long veiled his spirit. Fearful were the first awakenings of the soul. Like the last dread summons, it was not an awakening from oblivion. Every faculty wore the dark impress of terror, though he remained apparently unconscious of the interval that had passed.

Pilkington and his friend were unremitting in their attentions. The issue was long doubtful; but, in the end, he recovered from the dread hallucination under which he laboured.

With restored health, he disclosed, to them only, the events which had occurred in the brief interval of their separation.

"I think I before told you," said he, reluctantly commencing the narrative, "that the figure who appeared so mysteriously at the door of our temporary shelter on the hill, wore the very image of my uncle, whom you never knew, Pilkington. You may conceive that my surprise was excessive, though I cannot say that I felt so; but it will,

in some measure, account for my apparent rashness and eager determination to follow, when I inform you, that it was just twelve years previously, on that selfsame night, the eve of St. Bartlemy, when his unaccountable disappearance on these moors, of which I have before spoken, threw consternation and distress into the hitherto peaceful and happy community with which he was associated. I need not recount the family disasters and disagreements which his mysterious absence has originated. No trace was left of his disappearance; nor could his body ever be discovered. The night prior to our excursion I saw him; but it was in a dream. This circumstance, together with the place and the very time, twelve years since his departure, was the cause of my apparent thoughtfulness and abstraction, prior to the appearance of our mysterious visiter. I felt an apathy; and, at the same time, a load upon my spirits for which I could not account. I remember that I was scarcely alarmed, or even surprised, when he presented himself; and that I felt as though I had been waiting for his arrival, — more under the bewildering influence of a dream, than the sober conceptions of waking truth. I made no doubt but that the mystery would now be elucidated. I followed the retreating horseman, who, I saw, beckoned me forward, and occasionally seemed to chide my tardiness and want of speed. I could not hear his voice, but I thought he pronounced my name. He descended the hill with considerable haste, and it was with difficulty that I could now keep him in sight. Fully bent on the discovery, I resolved, if possible, let the consequence be what it might, that I would follow. The storm had suddenly abated, and the clouds were rolling off, in broken masses, through the calm ether, from which

the moon crept out, by whose aid I hoped to keep in view the object of my pursuit.

" The path he now took led up the ascent on the opposite hill. I clambered up, with some difficulty, but the flying horseman before me seemed to accomplish the work without either hesitation or inconvenience. He waited for me, when he had surmounted the steepest part of the acclivity, and I grew more and more convinced that it was my uncle's form, as I had seen him in my boyhood. Memory was sufficiently tenacious on this head; and, knowing the great need, as it concerned family affairs, that his fate should be clearly ascertained, I braved all hazards, and still followed this mysterious conductor. I do not recollect I felt any apprehension that I was following a supernatural guide; or that it might possibly be a phantom, who was luring me on to misery and destruction. The mild, benevolent aspect of my relative was before me, and I could not associate an idea of danger with the guide and protector of my youth.

As I gained the brow of the hill, I saw the dark form of the horseman dilated upon the wide, bare, uninterrupted horizon, in almost gigantic proportions. It might be the distance that caused this illusion, but the huge black horse appeared to wax in magnitude with every step, and to become more fiend-like and terrible. Still I followed, and, ere long, I beheld the two pillars, unto which our course was evidently tending. They seemed to rise up from the earth, like huge giants waiting for their prey. My guide, whom I had previously attempted to overtake, stood still when he reached them, awaiting my approach. With feelings strangely akin to those of an ill-fated victim, urged by some resistless fascination,

into the very jaws of his destroyer, I drew nearer to the object of my hopes and apprehensions. I recognised the very dress my uncle wore on ordinary occasions, and the strong square-built form that, in my childhood, I was accustomed to view with a parental regard. Yet was I disquieted with alarm and agitation. Horrible images rushed upon my brain. I seemed to be the sport and prey of some power I could not withstand — a power that, apparently, might wield my very faculties at his will, and had already taken the reins of self-government into his own keeping. I began to fancy that it was some terrible vision by which I was harassed; and I well remember it was the precise feeling that haunts us in our dreams, when a horrible doom is approaching, from which, apparently, there is no escape; and yet we feel as though assured some way will be opened for our deliverance. While we endure all the horrors of our situation, we know, of a surety, that our miseries shall soon terminate. Yet a cloud was gathering upon my soul, and objects assumed another hue seen through its wild and chaotic elements. With all the vagueness and uncertainty of a dream, I felt that I was awake!"

"'Dost thou know me?' said the mysterious enquirer, in a tone which I immediately recognised. Still there was an awful and thrilling emphasis in the expression, which alarmed me more than before.

"'I know you,' I replied, 'as the friend and guardian of my youth; but — to what end am I called hither, and why are you thus?'

"'My path is hidden!' said he, in a voice terrible and foreboding.

"'Tell me, where have you been? — Is this your habit-

ation? unless ——' shuddering, I added, in a low, but energetic tone, — ' unless you are some evil one, that hath ta'en his semblance to lure me to my hurt.'

" ' When the moon rides o'er the blue south, 'tis midnight; I will then reveal what thou hast desired, and the purpose of my coming.'

" ' Art thou really he whose form thou bearest? Answer truly, as thou dost hope for my stay.'

" ' I am!' he replied, in a tone so like that of my uncle, that I was now satisfied his very form was before me. Conjecture was vain, as to the motives that prompted this long and extraordinary concealment.

" ' Promise, Norton, that thou wilt tarry here until my return!'

" ' I will; but give me some pledge, some proof that thy being is real; that thou comest not as a phantom to delude my hopes.'

" He stretched out his hand. I again felt the warm pressure of my earliest friend, whom I had so long mourned as dead. I would have embraced him; but he shrunk back, and I saw the black steed again preparing, and impatient to depart.

" ' Remember,' said he, in a hollow voice, ' at midnight I will return.'

I leaned against the stone, determined to await the arrival of my mysterious relative, who would, I was convinced, on his return, satisfactorily elucidate his proceedings. Occupied with vain surmises and reflections, time passed on, almost unperceived; and, ere I was aware, the black steed was at my side. The rider suddenly dismounted. I drew back, instinctively, as he approached; for I saw, in the still clear light of the unclouded moon,

his countenance hideously distorted, and almost demoniacal in its expression.

" ' Thou art mine!' said he, laying one hand upon my shoulder; ' and thou shalt know, too soon, my terrible secret.' He came nearer; — I felt his breath upon my face; — it was hot and even scorching; — I was unable to resist; — he clung round me like a serpent; — his eyes shot livid fire, and his lips — hideous, detestable thought — his lips met mine! His whole spirit seemed diffusing itself throughout my frame. I thought my body was destined to be the habitation of some accursed fiend, — that I was undergoing the horrid process of demoniacal possession! Though gasping, almost suffocating — for I could not disengage myself from his deadly fangs — I exerted my utmost strength. One cry was to Heaven — but it was the last; — the soul seemed to have exhausted herself with the effort. All subsequent and sensible impressions vanished; and I remember nothing save horrible incoherent dreams, wherein I was the sport and prey of demons, or my own body the dwelling-place of some ever-restless and malicious fiend! From the long night of insensibility that ensued, I would be thankful that reason has awaked without injury; and though fearful, beyond the common lot of mortals, has been my destiny, yet I would render homage to that Power, whose might rescued me from the very grasp of the Evil One!"

The listeners were appalled, horror-struck beyond measure, at this fearful narrative. Its mysteries they could not solve by any reference to the usual course of natural events; no key that Nature holds would unlock this dark and diabolical mystery. To his dying day Norton firmly believed that his uncle's body was the abode

of some foul spirit, permitted to sojourn upon earth only on the fearful condition that he should effect his entrance, at stated periods, into a living human frame, whose proper occupant he might be able to dispossess for this hôrrible purpose. Many circumstances would seem to corroborate this belief. The adventure of the old poacher, in particular, happening precisely on the night of his uncle's disappearance, led Norton to conclude that the foul fiend was obliged to renew his habitation upon every twelfth return of the holy festival of St. Bartholomew. That a solution so inconsistent with our belief in the constant care and control of an all-wise and an all-powerful Providence was incorrect, we need not be at any pains to prove, in this era of widely disseminated knowledge and intelligence. Still a mystery, inscrutable under the ordinary operations of nature, appears to hang over the whole proceeding, and though a legend only, yet the events bear a wonderful semblance and affinity to truth, even in their wildest details.

It is said, that the "*Spectre Horseman*" appeared no more, and that having failed in fulfilling the terms by which his existence upon earth was, from time to time, permitted and prolonged, he was driven to his own place, where he must abide for ever the doom of those kindred and accursed spirits, whose aim it is continually to seduce and to destroy.

THE END.

LONDON:
Printed by A. & R. Spottiswoode,
New-Street-Square.

00083240

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 January, 2016